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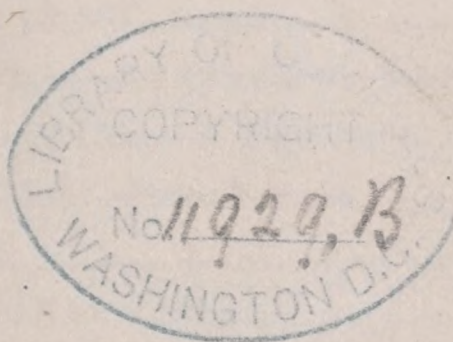
# HOW WILL IT END?

A ROMANCE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "HERODIAS," "ANTONIUS," "SALOME," ETC.



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### A ROMANCE

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# HOW WILL IT END?

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## CHAPTER I.

### ENTANGLED.

A GREAT civil war was drawing to its close. Few suspected, even, that its termination was so near. Both parties were actively carrying on operations in the field, and busily preparing for future campaigns, as if both still expected a long and severe struggle and were each determined to conquer. Skirmishes and battles were fought, prisoners taken, and confined, paroled, or exchanged, and numberless slain left unburied in lonely places where they fell, or hidden from the sight of men in nameless graves. Yet spring came back to the earth, as joyous, as gentle, as beautiful as ever, with even a greater wealth of flowers and sweetness than usual. For the earth, torn and trampled, or turned above the nameless graves, blushed with the bloom of new flowerets, which, in the eternal order of events, had waited ages, it may be, for this turning and trampling to bring them into light and life, and now came forth by millions, fresh, innocent, and smiling.

On a rustic seat, shaded from the warm rays of an April morning sun by the spreading branches of a tree which was already in full leaf, sat two officers. At a short distance



from them, through flowering shrubs and avenues of oaks, could be seen the piazzas of a gentleman's country-house; the pillars half concealed by luxuriant vines, whose blossoms filled the air with fragrance. Occasionally sweet chords of music might be heard from the mansion, as if a harp were struck by skilled hands in the intervals of conversation. But the officers seemed to take no heed of the music, nor, indeed, of anything about them, further than to make sure that they were not overheard.

One of them, who was addressed by his companion sometimes as colonel, sometimes simply as Allerton, was, apparently, about twenty-eight years of age, rather above the medium stature, finely formed, easy and graceful in his deportment, at the same time that a certain dignity, a kind of manly majesty, commanded at once the respect even of strangers. His hair, nearly black, was cut rather short; his forehead was high and bare, and a dark but not heavy beard shaded his cheeks and covered his upper lip and chin. His eyes, which, though many shades from it, appeared to be black, were deep and tranquil, but could evidently flash on occasion. His nose was rather aquiline than straight, with a delicate nostril; and his mouth indicated firmness and mastery of himself. His complexion, naturally dark, was bronzed by the exposures of the camp and the field.

His companion, whom he sometimes addressed as captain, sometimes as Bulldon, and sometimes intimately as Bull, was somewhat younger, tall, broad-shouldered, and muscular, with a form admirably developed. His eyes were gray and full of vivacity; his complexion ruddy; his hair, moustache, and whiskers, very light auburn; and his features almost Grecian in their symmetry.

"I wish to escape from this place as much as you can," said Allerton. "Do you think I need urging? My wound



is healed, and the only fever from which I now suffer is that of impatience."

"Are you quite sure of that?" put in Bulldon, significantly.

"Point out to me the way, and show me that the time is propitious, and you shall see if I am laggard," continued Allerton, without appearing to notice the other's question.

"But men in earnest make the time propitious in which they choose to act, since it looks on their achievements," said Bulldon. "They make themselves a way, and, advancing in it, surprise success. All ways are safe and every hour is friendly in which men conquer."

"Excellent maxims," returned the colonel; "but what then becomes of prudence?"

"Prudence," replied the captain, "is not a well-barred fortress in which men safely rest, but the armor of proof which they wear in action."

"Let us dispense with rhetoric, and metaphors, and metaphysics," retorted the other, just a little impatiently. "If you have something practical to propose, out with it."

"It is easy for me to propose a plan," said Bulldon; "but hard to make it agreeable, so long as you are held in the spell of that witch of a girl——"

"Nonsense!" broke in the other.

"If it please you to say 'nonsense,'—why, say it. But it would not please me, for I should not like to appear absurd. You must think me a very stupid fellow, quite unfit to take care of my head in the enemy's country, if you believe I am not almost as well informed as yourself in regard to the state of affairs about me. No, Allerton, this is no time for shamming with me. Let me tell you at once that I have seen the proofs of what I insinuate,—



yes, and heard them, too, because I could not help hearing sometimes what was not intended for my ears."

"If I should admit the truth of what you say——"

"I should think it more friendly and more manly than to deny it; that is all."

"Do you know, Bull," said the colonel, turning quickly, and laying his hand on the other's arm,—“do you know I have been wishing to tell you the whole story? I do love that girl, and I should be a fool and a brute if I did not.”

"Query as to the folly of *not* loving her," struck in Bulldon.

"Her forgetfulness of self," continued Allerton, with increased animation, "her sympathy, her gentleness, her care of me while I was ill, her tenderness, her trusting nature, her spirit, her wit, her beauty, completely mastered me, and I surrendered unconditionally, never thinking even of the honors of war; and by my surrender I conquered in turn, for I was taken into the very heart of the fortress, and have won over all the garrison."

"The tenderness did the business. You dark-eyed fellows never can stand that, when you think it is meant for yourselves," said Bulldon; adding, quietly, "And what do you propose to do with the garrison now?"

"You propose that I should abandon it," replied Allerton.

"No matter, for the present, what I propose," said the captain. "Tell me what you intend."

"Simply to do my duty; to leave this place and pass over to our forces as soon as possible," answered the colonel.

"And leave Marion here?" asked Bulldon.

"It must be so; there is no help for it," said the other, sadly enough, and with a certain sternness, as if he were passing sentence upon himself.



“And you have told her nothing? She knows nothing, but still believes we are of her party?”

“Certainly she thinks so. I have not dared even to intimate anything different; not so much, I fear, because our safety must depend upon our keeping up the deception, as because I dread the effect of the truth upon her feelings for me, since she regards the cause in which her friends are engaged almost as if it were her religion.”

“She suspects nothing?”

“She? Marion is too truthful herself to suspect others.”

“But I will tell you who does suspect us,—that d—d politician; and that is another, and an urgent, reason why we should be off.”

“I do not think that he suspects *us*. I believe he suspects me of being his rival, for he is in love either with Miss Marion or with her fortune.”

“Oh, he is too selfish to love any person, and too patriotic—that is, he would seem so, d—n him!—to love anything but ‘my country,’ and too politic to love anything but money, and too much of a politician not to hide, or, at least, try to hide, the real love by the sham. If he regards you as a dangerous rival, his wits, ears, and eyes will be sharpened, and we cannot too soon get beyond their reach.”

“I confess,” said Allerton, “that when I think, out of action and in cool blood, of turning my guns on the brave, honest fellows whom he, and others like him, have deceived, irritated, and sent angry to the field in this quarrel, my heart shrinks from it, and I regard mine as one of the most mournful, although one of the most imperative, of a good man’s duties. But, if I could fix a platoon of such fellows as he within range of my batteries, I think I would not allow a single gun to be fired except



by my own hand ; and you may believe I would not waste my shot."

"This disguise is very irksome," said Bulldon. "Do you know that one reason why I am so importunate to get away from here is that I cannot muster patience much longer to play this part and seem even to tolerate our distinguished friend? I have not the same party feeling as you, of course, but I may honestly detest a sneak wherever I find him."

"Yes, we must go, and at once. Everything urges our departure. There will be sharp work soon very near here, and we cannot be idle, even if it were safe for us to remain so. But that poor girl,—what shall I do——"

"Bah!" interrupted the captain.

"This is a rascally piece of business, Bulldon," continued the colonel. "But you know, as well as I, that I had no intention of deceiving her,—had no knowledge, even, of her existence, when we passed ourselves off so successfully as belonging to her party. I sometimes wish we had not been so fortunate, or unfortunate, as to succeed. For what would have been the sufferings of a few months of confinement, even in the worst of their prisons, compared with what I must suffer now, knowing, as I do, what I must make her suffer?"

"If you are only troubled by apprehensions of, and sympathy with, sorrows which she must feel, you may be quite at your ease. Her heart shall not break for you, that I will warrant."

"You think she does not love me?"

"I will not say that; on the contrary, perhaps she does. But it is in the modern way. Women do not love dangerously nowadays. At least, not with danger to themselves. There is a metallic quality in their hearts which prevents combustion and explosion."



“You wrong Marion outrageously when you apply such remarks to her. She has, in its greatest intensity, the womanly spirit of self-abnegation and self-sacrifice.”

“I will lay you a wager that her friend, the pettifogging puppy——”

“Her friend?” broke in Allerton, scornfully.

“Yes,—that he is now making love to her in the house, yonder, and that she listens with complacency, if not with pleasure.”

“But I know she dislikes him.”

“Granted. Yet she likes to hear him say he is dying for her, all the same; and it would not be the first time a woman has risked the loss of an honest man’s love for the sake of hearing a knave utter protestations of devotion.”

“I tell you she would listen to nothing of the kind.”

“And yet I can see that you are impatient to cut the patriotic Clappergong’s ears off, because you think that what I say is possible.”

“If what you say were true, it would only prove what a poor philosopher I am. Why should I desire to punish him for wishing to obtain what I would myself have, but must abandon?—for she can never be mine; I know it.”

“Then it is agreed that we shall leave?”

“As soon as possible.”

“To-day?”

“This very evening. I am to ride with Marion after the heat of the day is passed, as I have already done several times. You shall wait for me at some point to be agreed on. During our ride I shall undeceive her,—tell her the whole truth; and, whatever her decision, I shall be able to join you in time. Am I a coward, Bulldon?”

“He would be either a brave man, or a fool, who should dare to say so. Why such a question?”

“Because I am afraid to tell the truth to this sweet,



trusting, loving girl. I think I would rather skulk from the face of an enemy; and that, in my estimation, requires more courage, of a certain kind, than a brave man ever possessed."

"Do not undeceive her, then, at present; but——"

"Ah, that would be cowardly and cruel to the last degree."

"Well, do as you will. But mind you do not let that girl play upon you, and keep you talking, sighing, and making a fool of yourself generally. That lovers should never wish to be overheard is not surprising. It is a healthful indication, for it proves that they retain reason enough to know what ninnies they are, and to make them desire to conceal their folly."

"An indication, then, that love sharpens their wits and makes wise men of them. Do not fear. You shall not wait for me."

"Unless that charming creature should shed a tear or two. Let me tell you that in a week she would shed just as many for another."

"I would not think as you do for the world, Bulldon. You are always speaking lightly of woman's constancy. You must have had a sad experience."

"Experience!" repeated the other, bitterly; and his usually gay, and somewhat reckless, mood seemed suddenly to change. An expression of ineffable sadness stole over his handsome face, as he continued, with a voice that betrayed much emotion, "Experience! I never told you my experience. Why should I? We have had livelier and more agreeable topics of conversation during the few months that chance has thrown us intimately together. And, besides, it always makes me blue to talk of myself."

"Yet it is something which we all do, at times, impelled



by instinctive yearnings for sympathy in our joys and sorrows."

"I know it, and my time has come, I suppose. Not because my desire for sympathy is uncontrollable,—I have learned to dispense with that; and pity I despise, for it intimates inferiority in its object. Sympathy, on the contrary, implies equality between those who feel together, and might be tolerable, even delightful. But I have been taught how not to seek rather than how to find it. I am impelled by a strange feeling, which you may call a presentiment, if you like,—and so would I, if I believed in such things,—that my story, if told to you at all, must be told here."

"Poh! The presentiment is all nonsense. Do not tell me anything if it be not agreeable to do so; or tell it some other time. You may continue to sneer at woman's sincerity, and I will suppose you have some good reason for the want of faith that is in you. We shall soon be in active service again, and your presentiment will be knocked to pieces, like any other baseless fabric."

"No, if you please, I will speak now, and ever after hold my peace."

"I shall listen with the greatest interest."



## CHAPTER II.

## A PLEDGE OF LOVE.

“I HAVE two reasons for wishing to make you somewhat acquainted with my history,” said Bulldon, after a few minutes’ silence, in which he seemed to collect himself; and he now spoke in a low, deep voice, that almost startled Allerton, so different was it from his usual cheerful tone in conversation. But the ironical, mocking spirit, that so frequently flashed through his phrases, still remained. His eyes lost their sparkling vivacity, and grew soft and sad in their expression. “One reason is that which you have just mentioned, namely, that we shall soon be in action. We both know the risks we are to run before we reach our friends, and I am determined not to be taken prisoner again. The fact sounds badly, when talked of, and the life does not suit me. Even if we cross the lines in safety, we shall find work enough to keep us from gossiping for some time to come; and it is hard to tell what may occur in that time. If anything should happen to me, I should wish some one to know as much as I am going to tell you. It might, in possible contingencies, be serviceable; and I am acquainted with nobody whose discretion and honor I would trust so soon as your own.”

“My dear fellow!” exclaimed the colonel; but Bulldon interrupted him by saying,—

“No matter: let me go on.” And he continued: “The second reason is that, without knowing anything of my history, you have never asked me a personal ques-



tion, but have always treated me with the courtesy, consideration, and confidence which might be shown to a gentleman whose shield was covered with family indorsements, but hardly to be expected by a person whose parentage is so entirely unknown as is mine to you."

"I have always believed," said Allerton, "that I could distinguish a gentleman when I saw him, though he wore no label; an appendage rather superfluous than otherwise, and sometimes deceptive, according to my way of thinking."

"Nevertheless I owe it to you, as a matter of delicacy and honor," replied Bulldon, "to inform you whom you have thus distinguished. And let me tell you, in the first place, that I have no family, no family has me, and I am nobody."

"Stuff!" exclaimed Allerton.

"Simple truth," replied Bulldon. "Oh, I have good blood in my veins, sir,—royal blood, as to that; but I am nobody, as you shall see.

"Once upon a time a young man, some of whose ancestors had sat upon a throne, and who, since, has been widely known as Lord X., went into foreign parts, where he remained some six months or more, amusing himself, or completing his education, or both. While there, he met the daughter of a gentleman, a young lady for whose beauty I can vouch, having seen her frequently at one period of my life, and with her amused himself to such effect that, when he went home, she went with him. If the events which I am recounting had happened several centuries earlier, doubtless she would have accompanied him as his page; but, as the facts really occurred, he went as her servant, her slave, he himself asserted; and she was, consequently, his mistress. Of course her parents never gave their consent that she should occupy this exalted position; nor was it asked. Yet several letters were,



as I understand, written by her to them after her translation to the earthly paradise, but no answers were ever received.

“At length, in the natural course of things, a child was born,—a pledge of love, I believe, it is usually called ; because, as I suppose, the pledge is, in the first place, held as a kind of security, but in the end generally allowed to remain in the hands of one of the parties, as the only full and final payment of the debt by the other. In this pledge both the slave and the mistress felt a parental interest ; that is, they might naturally have done so. The mistress, having few or no associates, and living a lonely life enough, except when the slave was occasionally with her for a few hours at a time, assumed the duties of a mother with affectionate pleasure, and soon learned to understand all the cryings and crowings and cooings and strange sounds made by the infant, so that she could carry on a long conversation with him and laugh joyously at his young wit.

“But it came to pass, in the course of time, that thoughts of freedom entered the slave’s mind, and he wished to be emancipated. So he sold himself to, and married, a high-born lady, whose dower was an earldom. And the mistress, having no more a slave, was a mistress no longer ; and the slave, having a wife, was a free man.

“Meanwhile the pledge of love had grown till he was big enough to know himself a pledge of love, forfeited. His schoolfellows told him this often enough, and he would have learned it from the servants, when they were angry with him, if the schoolfellows had held their tongues ; for servants helped to take care of him. Lord X. wished him to receive a good, manly education, and made provision for the pledge and his mother ; for he had a mother, a sad, pale, weeping, beautiful mother, all alone



in the world, as it seemed to him when he used to try to comfort her, telling what brave things he would do when he should be a man.

“Well, he became a man,—a very young one, but thoroughly developed ; for he had flogged, or tried to flog, many a daring youngster who had called him bastard ; and, standing alone, as he did, without a father, his mind was also precociously matured, and he was self-poised and ready for the arena of life at sixteen.

“When he was about that age, walking with his mother one day, they met a gentleman in the street, at sight of whom she stopped suddenly, turned very pale, and extended her arms, exclaiming, ‘Brother!’ The gentleman looked at her for an instant, his face flushed, he muttered something very like an oath, and passed on. And then the mother fainted away. And the boy, not knowing what to think, and in terror, carried her into a neighboring shop, where she soon recovered, and wept bitterly. She had never told the boy anything of her family, and he never asked her ; for he had too much respect, and too much delicacy in his affection, to run the risk of wounding her by questions in regard to a history which he felt, intuitively, must be painful. He would gladly have listened to what she should voluntarily tell him of her own story ; but that was nothing, and he remained in ignorance. He only learned, by the painful incident just mentioned, that she had a brother who disowned her. He had remarked, too, that this brother was a tall, handsome, dignified, rather haughty-looking man. Not till some time later did he know, and then by accident, that a few days after their meeting in the street she sought out this brother, and, by surprising him, secured an interview, in which he denounced her as the murderess of her father and mother, alleging that her evil conduct



and desertion of them had hastened their deaths, calling her the eternal disgrace of his family, and saying many other terrible things to her ; and that the long and fearful illness, which had caused him so much anxiety, solicitude, and suffering on her account, was produced by this interview.

“For some years the boy had seen very little of Lord X., whom he had come to regard with aversion, as a person who had very ill treated his beautiful mother. But he could not complain that my lord had been ungenerous to him, so far, at least, as money was concerned ; for he had made such provision as secured to the young man an independent fortune, sufficient for a gentleman ; and that was much to do for one who had no claim on him, you know.

“Now, not very long after this meeting of the brother and sister, the mother, who hardly ceased to weep, and was tenderer and more affectionate than ever, held a long talk with the boy, one evening, giving him much excellent advice, and repeating maxims and injunctions which she had often urged on him before. He was to enter the army,—in fact, had already obtained his commission, and the next day was to join his regiment. She bade him good-night with tears, kissing him many times, and, as he left her, the last words he heard were, ‘Be good.’ The next morning she was nowhere to be found. But a small package, addressed to him, lay on her table. It contained her miniature, a lock of her hair, and a sealed letter ; also a note telling him to think of her thenceforth as dead, expressing many prayers, and protestations of affection, and enjoining upon him never to open the sealed letter till his own death should be near. This is the miniature, and this the sealed letter.”

Here Bulldon took a little leathern casket from his bosom, where he wore it suspended from his neck.



“How beautiful! What an angelic face!” exclaimed Allerton, as he looked at the picture with tender interest.

“It is a very truthful portrait,” said Buldon, and continued: “I was in very great distress, did not know which way to turn, nor what to do. I should have opened and read this letter then and there, but for the reverent love which had made me always obedient to my mother’s wishes, and, as you see, has preserved those sacred seals unbroken to the present time. I went unwillingly to my lord, who was, or seemed, as ignorant as myself in regard to the manner or motives of my mother’s sudden disappearance. He made the consolatory remark, however, that she had probably eloped; and, in reply to the suggestion from me that, if such were the case, there could be no reason for this painful concealment and mystery, he said that this was probably arranged to heighten the effect; that women understood these things; that they were the only epicureans; that they could render the commonest morsel exquisite simply by the manner of taking it, and could tickle their palates more with a crab-apple, if fancying themselves forced to take it slyly, than with the most luscious fruits of the tropics at an open feast. I will not say how I resented this language.

“I obtained two weeks’ leave of absence, and, at the end of that time, joined my regiment, without having discovered anything further in relation to my mother. We were under marching orders, and sailed almost immediately for the East, where a certain feeling of desperation induced me to do things which attracted the attention of my superiors, and I rose rapidly in the service. I came back to the country of my birth, after an absence of five years, and learned that, shortly before my arrival, Lord X. had been thrown from his horse, while hunting, and broken his neck.



“And then it was that I learned more distinctly that, legally considered, I was a living miracle, the son of nobody. This death, however, did not affect the property which had been placed in trust for my use some years previously, and I still found myself independent, as well as somewhat distinguished in my profession. I again made all the search possible, hoping to learn something of my mother. But the field of inquiry was small, so quiet and secluded had been her life. I grew restless. At length I determined to come to this country, where, I believed, nobody would care when, in what place, or by what means I came into this world, provided I should show myself worthy to fill in it an honorable place. In the main I was not disappointed. There will be some weakness, prejudice, and illiberality wherever there are human beings. I was well received, treated with kindness and sufficient distinction, and, in the course of some months, met a lady to whom I was at once especially attracted. She was still very young. Beautiful? You would call her so. She was very fair, of medium stature, and moulded to the very perfection of shape for ideal womanhood. Her eyes were of so deep a blue that you would have sworn they were black, had you never particularly studied their color. Her hair; very abundant, was what I should call golden red, although I suppose I ought to say light auburn. Her features were exquisitely formed and harmonious; her upper lip short and curved, and her smile disclosed white teeth of the most regular and perfect fashion. Her hands were small, finely formed, and pearly white; and her feet looked as if they were made to tread on flowers, and arched so that they should step delicately. Her beauty was of that soft and touching kind sometimes seen in women of her complexion, and her expression one of such innocence and candor that



it seemed impossible for her to entertain suspicion or distrust."

"I need not ask if you fell in love with her," said Allerton.

"I might have admired her only as we may the divinely beautiful," replied Bulldon, "had I not perceived in her, as I thought, a certain sympathy, almost the evident expression of a wish to bring and hold me near her. I could not, nor did I attempt to, resist the fascination, I should perhaps say inspiration, of these indefinable, subtle, delicate evidences of her trust, of her yielding to an attraction existing in myself. I became deeply enamored of her. I told her so, like a man and a soldier. She modestly and sweetly responded, as I would have her."

"But I thought you light-eyed fellows could resist tenderness," broke in Allerton, with a meaning smile.

"This war was raging fiercely," went on Bulldon, without noticing the interruption, "and I had intended to ask that my services be accepted by the authorities which you serve, but was deterred, alike by my disinclination to leave her, and by her dissuasions; for she made use of all her tender influence to keep me from following my plan. As I had no personal interest in the war, I was the more easily persuaded by her.

"An unexpected occurrence in my own affairs called me away for six months. Her letters were charming,—full of sweet wit and assurances of lasting affection. Besides the more solemn asseverations, she found a thousand ingenious forms of expression in which to insinuate her entire and eternal love for me, a thousand coquettish fancies to tempt me back, and as many earnest prayers that I would hasten my return. I needed neither urging nor invitation, for I was miserable away from her, and burning with impatience to be again at her side. At



length I had the pleasure of announcing, by letter, my immediate departure to rejoin her. No sooner had I arrived than I sent a message, saying that I should wait upon her in the evening; and I went eagerly to keep my promise. She was at the country-seat of her family, a short distance from the city. I knew that she had received my message, and was, consequently, exceedingly disappointed, not to say dismayed, when I was told that she was not at home. Unable to abandon the hope of seeing her that night, I said I would call again later, and strolled into the grounds, where I found and seated myself in a summer-house, which, covered with vines thickly interlaced, was quite dark within. Near by I could hear the murmuring of a brook, which ran along the bottom of a little dell, whose sides were densely studded with trees and evergreen shrubbery. Here I intended to wait for an hour or two, and then call again at the mansion, hoping thus to see her who was dearer to me than all things, and who, I doubted not, was detained away by some unexpected hinderance. Although the night was cold, I was burning with fever. I could not be calm; my breath came and went heavily, and my whole frame was shaken by the tumultuous beatings of my heart.

“I had remained here perhaps an hour, although my impatience may have made the time seem much longer than it really was, when I heard subdued voices on the brink of the dell, and could just see the shapes of two persons,—a man and a woman,—close together, slowly emerging from among the shrubbery. Dim as was the light, and low as were the tones in which the conversation was carried on, I could not mistake the form or the voice of the woman. It was she for whom I had been waiting. They paused before coming to the clearer light in the open space, between the edge of the thicket and the sum-



mer-house, remained a few minutes, hand-in-hand, still talking earnestly; then they embraced warmly, and the man disappeared again among the trees and bushes in the darkness. His companion stood looking after him a moment, and then hastily passed the summer-house and ran lightly towards the mansion.

“If I had before doubted who she might be, I could do so no longer; for, as she passed, her face and form were clearly revealed to my view, and I too well knew the wonderful grace of her movements not to be wretchedly certain as to her identity. I do not think I moved for an hour. I was completely prostrated. A mortal illness seemed to overwhelm me.

“At length I arose and walked unsteadily away. I regained my hotel in the city, wrote a letter to her in the course of the night—for I did not sleep, nor even think of slumber or rest—containing only these words:

“‘Had I known as much before as I did after calling this evening, you would not have been annoyed by the expectation of my visit.’

“And with this I sent the letters which she had written to me, her portrait in miniature, some mementos, everything, in short, that I had ever received from her.

“The next morning I went to the headquarters of your army and formally offered my services, which were accepted.

“Thus, you see, I am a man whose mother was—a woman, and one of the sweetest and dearest, whose sweetheart was—a woman, and one of the loveliest and most devoted.

“And yet he talks lightly of women,” added the speaker, after a short pause, and in tones of bitter mockery.



## CHAPTER III.

## A PATRIOT.

JUST as Bulldon had finished his narrative, and before Allerton could make any comment, they were joined by Miss Marion Devray and the Honorable Pestyfog Clapperpong. These came from the direction of the house, and seemed to have been engaged in earnest, if not exciting, debate; for the lady's cheek was flushed, and her eyes sparkled with even more than their ordinary brilliancy,—sparkled with a kind of indignant, defiant light, like fire that has just been stirred, instead of with their usual soft radiance, as the friends heard her say, speaking, in the animation of the moment, louder than she intended,—

“You would not dare say that to him.”

In stature Miss Marion was a little above the medium height, exquisitely shaped, surpassingly graceful, and carried herself superbly, like one born and accustomed to receive homage and obedience. She was, apparently, about eighteen years of age. Her eyes were large, deep, and dark, shaded by long black lashes; her hair, which, from its very luxuriance, escaped partially from its fastenings and fell upon her shoulders, should, but for the fear of ridicule, be called changeable in color,—changeable in this, namely, that ordinary lights made it look a very deep brown; but, when the sun shone fully upon it, what might be called an invisible golden hue appeared. Her neck, brow, and hands, of the most polished fairness, were models of beauty; her cheeks were tinted with the softest



shades, and her lips with the deepest colors of carnation. Her features and the shape of her head and face were classical, belonging, however, rather to the Roman than the Grecian classics; and her whole appearance indicated a warm-hearted, earnest, impulsive, perhaps passionate, and perhaps, also, imperious nature.

The Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong—those who knew him intimately called him Pest, or Pesty—was a dark-complexioned, spare man, with small, very black eyes, a hooked nose, thin lips, a smoothly-shaven face, and very long straight black hair. He seemed from thirty-five to forty years of age. He rarely laughed or smiled, seldom, if ever, lost his self-possession, not even when apparently excited to the highest degree of anger or enthusiasm. And enthusiastic he could be, for a purpose. His chief, and almost his only, purpose in life was the advancement of himself in the ways of political distinction and on the road to fortune. Consequently he had studied and become so good a master as he might of all the arts of dissimulation and the tricks of popular oratory. He could speak long, fluently, and often, without saying much, and he possessed such copiousness of words that the little he had to say could be uttered by him in a hundred different ways, with such variations of amplification and changes of proportion that at each repetition his auditors supposed they were listening to something new. He aimed to excite the fancy with high-sounding phrases and the wildest hyperbole, and declaimed in an earnest, often a very loud, voice, and with violent gesticulation. His themes were patriotism and national glory, and his theories and practice based on the axiom that whatever political action might profit his personal interests was both patriotic and glorious. He had too just an estimate of a popular audience, assembled to hear a political harangue,



to attempt to convince by logical arguments ; he preferred to fire the imagination and feelings by rhetorical representations. Truth was good, when it would serve his turn ; but, even in this case, he magnified it to the proportions of fiction ; and when truth, thus exaggerated, or otherwise, would not serve his turn, he liked unmixed falsehood better. It is, indeed, very doubtful whether he could have argued logically had he wished so to do ; for the logical faculty rarely exists in its full strength except in combination with an instinctive love of truth.

“We have been talking about you,” said Marion to Allerton, while a sweet smile stole from her lips up into her eyes and softened their brightness. “Did not your ears burn ? And which of them ? Colonel Clappergong says you ought to be at the front, and I say you ought to be here ; that you are not yet sufficiently recovered to take the field.”

“I was just remarking to Miss Devray,” said the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, “that, at such a time, it was a great misfortune that our cause should lose the aid of two of its best soldiers.”

“You said more than that,” put in Marion, quietly.

“Perhaps the gentleman will be kind enough to tell us all his remark,” observed Allerton, feeling very much as if it would be delightful to quarrel with the Honorable Pestyfog. Having decided to depart himself, he felt a greatly increased animosity to that distinguished person, who was to remain behind.

“So earnest a patriot could say nothing by which we might not profit,” suggested Bulldon.

“I have never hesitated to speak when my words could be of use to our oppressed and afflicted country,” said the Honorable politician. “The dictates of patriotism are above all other considerations ; and I could not help



saying to this charming lady that I feared you, gentlemen, were rather lukewarm in the cause, that you prolonged your absence from the field unnecessarily, at a time when a crisis is evidently approaching, and when every soldier should be at his post. Of course these remarks were not intended for your ears, gentlemen, and you must take no offense. Feeling, as I do, that life itself is nothing when poised against the interests which our country has at stake in this war, it is surprising to me, to say the least of it, that any should prefer their personal comfort to the pleasure of sacrificing on the altar of patriotism. It is perhaps possible, though most improbable, that our enemies may, for a time, push their invasions on into the heart, even, of our country. But, in that case, let them find nothing but our dead bodies amid smouldering ruins and general desolation. I would that my convictions and zeal could be felt by all, for then I should find no necessity to fire cold hearts and urge sluggards on to duty !”

“And then,” said Allerton, who had listened to this speech without moving a muscle, “you would be at liberty to go to the field yourself, which you must ardently desire. I believe you have not been in the service?”

“Oh, yes, he has,” broke in Marion, wickedly ; “that is how he got his colonel’s commission. He was on the staff of the general commanding the reserves,—or forming the camps of volunteers,—or in the quartermaster’s department,—or—how was it, colonel?” turning to the Honorable Mr. Clappergong. “But when all were ordered to the front he was obliged to resign, or get permanent leave of absence, or something of the sort, to look after the cold hearts and sluggards, and the supplies, for which he had contracted. Am I not right, Colonel Clappergong?”



"In the main," replied the person addressed, coolly enough. "I was obliged, to my great regret, to remain behind. The interests of the cause generally demanded this sacrifice of me."

"What a misfortune!" sighed Bulldon.

"I knew it was better for me, by my exertions at home, to send a thousand, or even a hundred, men to the field than to go myself," continued the Honorable gentleman. "And I knew, too, that those who went to the field would soon be useless, unless sustained by those who remained behind. The army, that vast engine, which acts directly against the enemy, must be fed with fuel, as it were, supplied with all things necessary to its efficient and continued action by those who go not with it. And, knowing that I possessed some peculiar advantages for the discharge of these duties, while many could as well handle a musket, or a regiment, as myself, I gave up my preferences, as we must all be ready to do, and stayed behind."

"What disinterestedness!" murmured Bulldon.

"And if we fail?" questioned Allerton.

"We cannot fail," returned the Honorable Mr. Clapergong. "No people like us, engaged in a cause like ours, ever failed."

"But they are pushing us hard," said Allerton.

"Let them push," responded the Honorable gentleman. "When they shall be able to push the mountains to the sea, they may succeed in driving us thither. And, if they should, the very waves would reprove and lash us back again to victory."

"And what would then become of your vocation? Where would you be?" asked Allerton.

"On the sea, of course, fishing, and casting nets, and looking for munitions, staying beyond the breakers, and



talking," answered Marion, plucking a rose and moistening her lips with its dew as she pressed it to them.

"I would, indeed, dominate even the waves and dragoon them into our service, if it were necessary," said the Honorable Pestyfog. "But that can never be. Our enemies have somewhat crushed us at different points of contact, it must be admitted. Yet that has been done by the mere force of matter, of superior weight. They have no skill, no knowledge of strategy, no daring of the higher kind, nothing of that spiritual courage which is the soul of what we call chivalry."

"Which you so deeply feel and so spiritedly represent," said Bulldon.

"Our forces are falling back, it is true, but only because the game requires such moves. They are made to decoy our antagonists on to the fate prepared for them," explained the Honorable gentleman.

"You will, doubtless, be in at the death," remarked Bulldon.

"I doubt that," put in Marion. "Colonel Clapper-gong will be too far in the rear to come up in time. You know his duties keep him in the rear, except in case of a retreat."

"The political condition of the state demands constant, indeed, the greatest attention," said the Honorable Pestyfog. "The military power is so organized that it moves like a well-regulated machine. This can never be the case with the political forces of a country, which require incessant watching and the never-ending labor of organization. I feel no anxiety as to the result of the armed struggle. There can be no such thing as ultimate failure."

"Let us hope so," said Bulldon, demurely.

"A braver people than ours never lived, sir," continued



the Honorable gentleman, "and an appeal to arms was never made in a holier cause. But were it possible that our men could, by the effects of a series of reverses, or otherwise, all become craven, our women would take up their abandoned weapons and chase our invaders to their remotest fastnesses,—ay, sir, sweep them into the bottomless gulfs of the sea, as Michael and his angels hurled the arch-fiend and his followers from Paradise to the infinite abyss. Would they not, miss?"

Marion did not at once reply to this appeal, for she liked not to take sides with, or to seem in any way to echo, the Honorable Mr. Clappergong. She felt a hearty contempt for him, and the especial displeasure which he had caused her was not yet appeased. And yet she believed that what he said of her countrywomen was, in a degree, true, though expressed so grandiloquently and with a great deal of exaggeration. Bulldon saved her the trouble of answering, by saying,—

"This might well happen, though the men were not craven; might be brought about even by their attaining to the most excellent degree of patriotism, so that they should all be willing, every man of them, to sacrifice their preferences, nay, insist even on staying at home to look after the munitions and the political organizations and the condition of the country."

"I have no doubt," said Marion, "that the women would willingly take up arms in this quarrel rather than that our cause should fail. We have the proud consciousness that by our influence, in a great measure, the ranks of our army have been filled. Even all the eloquence of Colonel Clappergong has not been more efficient for this purpose than a few earnest words spoken by some of us. But we have faith in those who love us," and her eyes met, for an instant, those of Allerton; "we know that



they are fighting for us more than for themselves, and that they will shrink from no duty or danger. And we would also have them know that we conjure them not to expose themselves rashly or unnecessarily to peril. Aside from all other considerations, their lives and their strength are too precious in this time of our need to be incautiously risked."

"In this I entirely agree with you, miss," said the Honorable gentleman; "and I believe you will do me the justice——"

"Oh, we should all be glad to do you that," interrupted Bulldon.

"And I propose to do it," said Allerton.

"What?" asked the Honorable Pestyfog.

"Why, justice, in a small way," replied Allerton, and continued: "There is a class of men for whom I have the greatest contempt and aversion. I mean those who used all the arts of rhetoric, all the powers of invention, misrepresentation, and slander, to urge on this quarrel till war should be inevitable; who, instead of laboring to diffuse truth, only disseminated and cherished falsehoods, and wrought, like demons, to exaggerate errors and misunderstandings between the two parties, instead of proving, as they might easily have done, that the most important differences rested only on imaginary wrongs, and thus, by an honorable use of knowledge, preventing this most unhappy conflict; and who, when hostilities actually began, were careful to stay as far from the field as possible, still occupied with their devilish work of propagating party spirit, diffusing deceptions, firing hearts with the very heats of hell, and forcing thus to the front the brave, generous, and really patriotic victims of their political tricks and ambitious conspiracies. And of that class I think you, sir, an able representative and a superior speci-



men," added the speaker, looking the Honorable Mr. Clappergong straight in the eye.

"This is not the first time that I have felt compelled to sacrifice my inclinations for the good of my country," said the Honorable gentleman.

"We all know that," put in Marion, quietly pulling the leaves off a vine. "What inclination do you sacrifice now, colonel?"

"I would not sacrifice it," observed Bulldon.

"Luckily, I can be master of myself when great interests might be adversely affected by yielding to a natural impulse," said the Honorable Pestyfog. "Otherwise I should chastise you, sir, as you deserve," looking fiercely at Allerton, "for it is evident that you wish to insult me."

"Do not put too much force upon yourself, I beg," said Allerton.

"It might injure you, which would be worse for the cause than to chastise my friend," remarked Bulldon; "for then who would look after the political condition of affairs, the munitions, and the zeal of men for the front?"

"I seek no quarrel with you, sir," retorted the Honorable gentleman.

"Never did with anybody, I fancy," rejoined Bulldon, calmly.

Marion began to look more serious and a little scared; was ready, in fact, to use her influence to prevent an impending collision. But her fears were groundless, although the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong was really getting very angry; the more so that she had seemed rather to enjoy what he considered a direct attack upon himself. Yet it was not his choice to meet such an attack frankly. He subdued or dissembled such wrath as he felt, and said, somewhat stiffly,—

"I see we cannot agree, gentlemen; but it is not neces-



sary for us to quarrel. It is well known that the purest patriots are seldom appreciated in their day and generation, and I cannot hope to be more fortunate than others, who have suffered from all sorts of suspicion and misrepresentation. Time will probably show which of us are really what we seem, and which of us would pass ourselves off for that which we are not."

As he uttered the last sentence, the Honorable gentleman glanced furtively and malignantly at the two friends. Then he turned and walked away in the direction of the mansion. The officers looked at each other significantly, as if they would say, "He suspects us."

"He will never forgive you," said Marion to Allerton, when the Honorable Pestyfog had disappeared.

"So much the worse for him," replied Allerton. "An unforgiving man must be very unhappy."

Then they talked a little while together, and appointed definitely the hour for their evening ride. And then Marion returned to the house. Allerton accompanied her thither, lingered a short time on the piazza, and then came back to Bulldon.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### PERSONS AND PLOTS.

GENERAL DEVRAY, Marion's father, was with his troops in the field, occupying the positions nearest the enemy, and fighting, when occasion offered, like an honest gentleman and partisan. For his judgment dictated, and his conscience fully approved, his action. He sincerely believed the cause that he had espoused, and in which his



friends and neighbors were engaged, to be just in the sight of Heaven. Unlike many others, he had counted the cost. He had, as he thought, fully estimated the evils of a civil war, and had devoted all his powers to the contest, with a disposition, at the same time, to mitigate, so far as possible, its horrors.

It would not be true to say that he did not hesitate before entering on this course. Yet his was not the hesitation of selfishness, or of one who doubted of his duty; it was rather that of one who would, if it might be, have the cup pass from him and from his people,—from all, in fact, both friends and foes, who must otherwise taste its bitterness. But when he perceived that this could not be,—when he saw that an appeal to the sword had been made in a long-standing dispute, and that he must range himself distinctly and finally upon one side or the other,—he passed one night in prayers and tears, and in the morning his hesitation was at an end. He girded on his sword with a calm, serious face, but with no show of despondency.

Whether he was, in fact, right or wrong might be a question for others; he certainly was honest and sincere, and he had no doubts. He went to the field in the spirit of a martyr, or of a crusader.

But, though esteemed a true gentleman by all who knew him, a model man in all the relations of life, he had his faults. Yet these were of the nobler kind. His was no petty pride, but strong and masculine, too hard and too stern. The respect which he entertained for his family name amounted almost to religion, and had the defects too often associated with religious feeling; that is, this sentiment, with him, seemed to border on fanaticism, was sometimes bigoted, frequently uncharitable, and generally unforgiving to those who sinned against this object



of his worship, if so strong a term might be used to indicate that which was only venerated, not adored.

When the war broke out, he was possessed of large wealth. This he unhesitatingly risked on the result of the contest, devoting large sums at once to the use of his party. But Marion's fortune, left by her mother, he had caused to be placed securely in foreign investments; for he felt that he could not stake his daughter's future welfare on the chances in which he had ventured his own, without being recreant to his double duty as father and trustee. He had been for some years a widower, and Miss Mabie Holdon, a poor and distant relative, had, since the death of his wife, dwelt with him, and, as well as she could, taken the place of the former mistress of the household. Gentle and kind, she yet had peculiarities of character and disposition not rarely found in persons of her age, sex, and condition. She was still unmarried, although she had some time ago come to years of discretion. Her face could not be called beautiful, nor her form voluptuous, but she had very small feet, which were seldom quite invisible, and very white, well-shaped hands, which she seemed constantly to caress. She talked much of intellect, while she affected not to be clever herself. To judge by what she said, her taste in literature must have been esteemed liberal; for she praised everything of which she heard praises. She talked of her favorite authors, not unfrequently naming some of them, and once said that she liked very much the Waverley novels, but had never read any of Scott's works. Her conversation was such as an enthusiastic person, not yet wearied with vain repetitions, might use. She greatly admired talent for speaking and writing—or, rather, those who wrote and spoke—for the public. Consequently the Honorable Mr. Clappergong was deeply revered by her, for she thought him



eloquent, a statesman, and a man of genius; and it was by her influence and management that this Honorable gentleman had been for some time received intimately at the hospitable mansion of General Devray.

Miss Mabie frequently praised the merits of Miss Marion, but regretted that she was not more intellectual. And when extolling this young lady, whom she alone had discovered to be deficient in the higher intellectual qualities, and “unfit to be the wife of a man of genius,” a kind of intense softness would creep into her eyes and quiver along the tones of her voice; and this softness reached its most fascinating degree as, by an easy transition, she would change the subject to a eulogy of the Honorable gentleman himself, expressing constant astonishment that he was not married, saying that it must be of his own choice that he was not,—that he ought to have such and such a wife, describing minutely the person he should select. It was interesting to notice, at these times, how much her ideal wife resembled her own visible, tangible, and audible self.

The Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong was not a person who would lose an opportunity, or waste an advantage, willingly; and he believed both existed in the evident disposition of Miss Mabie Holdon towards himself. Therefore, for some time, he had paid such ostensible court to this lady as to convince her that she was the dearest object of his affections, and to make her feel that she might now throw aside the veil with which she had affected to conceal, while liberally displaying, her tender admiration for him. In this way he secured a strong footing in the household, an open approach to Marion, and, at the same time, a blind affection on the part of Miss Mabie, which might perhaps be made to serve his selfish purposes. He succeeded, to some extent, at least, in appeasing the jealousy



which his apparent devotion to Marion caused, by representing that, in this way, remark would be turned from themselves, and they left more at liberty. Besides, he asserted that ordinary politeness demanded of him a certain show of attention to the young hostess.

It was no secret to the Honorable gentleman that Marion's fortune was large, and had been placed beyond the chances of a partisan war; and he designed by perseverance, or otherwise, to obtain that young lady's consent, and, by marriage with her, insure his own future against the accidents of violent and vindictive political dissensions. In such a position and with such purposes was he at the house of General Devray when the events recounted in the first part of this story took place.

Another person had also, for a few days, been a lodger with this family; namely, Captain Trangolar, an officer of engineers, who now, by invitation, had taken up his residence in the house, while superintending the construction of some defensive works in the neighborhood. He was a small, near-sighted man, so much absorbed in scientific studies, and particularly in the science of mathematics as applied to hostile purposes, that he rarely thought of the war as it actually existed, with all its terrible concomitants, as of something in which he was directly engaged. He felt and reasoned as coolly about the effects of such and such positions of armies and fortifications as he would have done of those occupied by the pieces in a game of chess, and without any more thought as to fatal results. Had the command of an army been intrusted to him, he would have refrained from making an attack until he could demonstrate, mathematically, that he ought to win a victory; and had the attack, thus carefully calculated, failed, he would have been utterly



surprised and confounded by such an evidence of the falsity of mathematical demonstrations.

After leaving Marion and the two friends in the garden, the Honorable Mr. Clappergong did not return to the mansion, although he made as if he were going to do so. Reasons all his own caused him to turn aside and take a path obscured by a hedge of roses. In this he came back, unseen, near to the spot where Allerton, having rejoined Bulldon, was now engaged with his friend in earnest conversation. Hidden by the shrubbery, the Honorable gentleman found that he could, unperceived, hear all that was said by the two officers, who, believing themselves again quite alone, were talking, in a low tone, to be sure, but much more distinctly than was prudent.

"It is plain that, if we would escape, it must be at once. Without doubt he suspects us; and now the desire to achieve a cowardly revenge will incite him to keener action. I am convinced that he is as unscrupulous as he is mean," said Allerton.

"There need be no delay," replied Bulldon.

"You feel perfectly sure of our humble friend?" asked the colonel.

"Certain of him. He is as true as steel," answered the captain.

"Let us, then, immediately decide upon the course we are to pursue," urged Allerton.

"I have already arranged a plan with our friend," responded Bulldon.

"State it, please."

"He is to wait for us some miles from here, at the edge of the wood, just by the big oak, where we were the other day, whenever I shall give him the signal. Thence he will guide us to a covert in the forest, where some of his fellows will be waiting with such provisions as may serve



our necessities. They will undertake, by secret ways, to lead us beyond the lines. He knows his men, and says we can rely upon them implicitly."

"All very good; but let me suggest a change. I am to ride with Miss Devray at five o'clock, as you know. Do you, therefore, wait with him, at the place you have named, for me at seven o'clock, and I will join you at that hour, or as soon after as possible. We shall then be able to get well into the wood before it is very dark."

"Yes; but mind what I said, and do not let the girl delay you——"

"Never fear——"

At this moment Captain Trangolar, who had been hard at work all the morning in his room, joined the two friends. He was on his way to the fortifications, to observe what progress had been made and give any necessary directions, and had stopped to exchange a few friendly words with the officers.

No sooner had the captain of engineers arrived than the Honorable Mr. Clappergong left his hiding-place quietly and gained the house unobserved. He went directly to Allerton's chamber, where were that gentleman's riding-boots, which had been brightly polished by the servant Cass, and drew his foot, to which some of the soft soil of the garden still adhered, over them, so as to cover them with dirt. Then he sought at once Miss Mabie Holdon. That lady was in a demonstrative fit of the pouts; for she knew that he had enjoyed a long interview with Marion alone that very morning, and more than suspected that he had ardently made love to her. He came smilingly into the room, and seemed not to perceive that a storm was brewing. When, however, he could no longer ignore the indignant mood of Miss Holdon, he affected surprise and pain at it; was deeply wounded by it; reproached her



tenderly for it ; caressed her gently and respectfully, and wheedled the cloud from her brow with assurances of unswerving fidelity in thought as well as in deed. Then he asked her to help him do something,—to play a trick on Trangular, just to see the perplexity of the man of science, and how he would fret and storm ; and, when he had cajoled a consent from the tender-hearted spinster, he instructed her as to the part she was to play ; which was, to enter that officer's room—which the captain had left carefully locked, as was his habit, the better to keep his work from the eyes of others, but of which, like all good housekeepers in similar circumstances, she possessed a duplicate key—and take from his table all the drawings she could find and bring them to him. —He would hide them for awhile, just to tease Trangular, he was so particular. She was also to bring him some coarse thread, some wax, and a large needle.

All this she did with alacrity, happy to do anything for so great and good a man, and flattered to be engaged with him in any act. Then he summoned Cass, and scolded him for not having polished the colonel's boots, reproaching him for being so negligent of a guest, and ordered him to fetch them at once and clean them. Cass said that he had brushed the boots early in the morning, as usual ; but the Honorable gentleman told him to hold his tongue and do as he was bid. The Honorable Pestyfog Clapper-gong was so well established in the house that the servants obeyed him as if he had been the master ; and Cass went to bring the boots. As he was returning with them, the Honorable Pestyfog ordered him to leave the boots there and run at once to do an errand, pretending that it was a matter of great importance, which he had forgotten. And Cass did as he was commanded.

When the servant had disappeared, the Honorable Mr.



Clappergong took one of the boots, ripped the stitches by which the lining was fastened at the top of the leg, inserted between the lining and the outside leather those of the drawings, brought from Trangolar's room, which were on thin paper, and which comprised a nearly complete plan of the fortifications that the engineer had in charge, and then, in a manner not likely to attract attention, replaced the stitches as well as he could, by means of the needle, thread, and wax which Miss Holdon had brought him. Those of the drawings not thus used he caused to be taken back and left on Trangolar's table by his amiable assistant.

When Cass returned, he found the boots where he had left them, polished them, as he had already done in the morning, and replaced them in Allerton's chamber.

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## CHAPTER V.

### MAN AND HORSE.

"ARE you going to ride this evening?" asked the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong, carelessly, of Allerton, as they met at lunch.

"Such is my intention," replied the colonel.

"Pray take my horse, then," said the Honorable gentleman, blandly. "I shall esteem it a favor if you will ride him. He needs exercise, as I have not had him out for some time."

"I have noticed that you did not mount him," observed Bulldon, softly.



“No. The truth is, I have not had time to do so,” said the Honorable Mr. Clappergong.

This statement was not true, however. The Honorable gentleman would have spoken truly had he said that he was afraid to mount the animal, which he had purchased not a long time before, had once ridden, and, in a contest with the brute, had come off second best, considering himself lucky indeed that he was able to come off the field at all. But he said nothing of this, and it was not known to any of the company present.

The horse was, or appeared to be, naturally vicious, and had never been thoroughly mastered. His owner would have sold him, but an opportunity had not presented itself. His purpose was to induce Allerton to ride this savage beast, believing that he would be so unmanageable as to injure or disgrace the colonel, and completely thwart his plan of escape, or, at any rate, retard his movements enough to make his capture easy.

Allerton's suspicions were at once aroused by the offer; but he could not well decline it, since he had, a few days before, expressed a wish to mount the steed, which was, in appearance, a magnificent charger. Besides, he did not wish to sharpen the Honorable Mr. Clappergong's suspicions by any show of distrust; and so he thanked the owner, and said he would ride the horse with pleasure.

After lunch Bulldon withdrew, and did not again return to the drawing-room, whither the company had gone to hear some music, which Marion had consented to give them. She had an exquisite voice, and not only sang finely, but also accompanied herself skillfully on the harp. Her singing was a great relief to Allerton, unfitted for conversation as he was by the preoccupation of his mind and the contending emotions which made a tumult in his breast; although, with his knowledge of the events about



to take place, he could hardly resist its softening and saddening influence. More than once his eyes became dim with rising tears as he listened to her thrilling utterance of the tender words of some song to which the circumstances in which he was placed gave a deep and painful significance.

At length it was time to prepare for the ride. Cass was summoned and ordered to saddle the horses. He manifested evident surprise, not unmixed with alarm, when told to bring the Honorable Pestyfog's horse for Allerton, and tried, unperceived by the others, to make signs to the colonel, who either did not, or purposely appeared not to, see them. Cass was the friend on whom Allerton and Bulldon relied to aid them in making their escape. He was a Nubian, of the darkest African hue, with a serious, sad face, an intelligent eye, and well-developed, muscular form. He was always respectful and submissive in his demeanor; yet in his submissiveness there was ever a certain dignity.

When the horses were led up, the Honorable Mr. Clapergong noticed with displeasure that Cass had put on his horse a powerful bridle, well fitted for use in subjecting a savage animal, and had brought a heavy riding-whip, which his master had sometimes used. The Honorable gentleman could not refrain from cursing the servant, saying that the horse would not bear either that bridle or the whip; but Cass had the courage to reply that the horse was a hard one to manage, and for that reason he had thought it best to equip him in such a way as to give his rider all the advantage possible. The honest fellow did not express his meaning in just this language, to be sure, for he spoke like one of his class. Allerton, divining at once his faithful friend's purpose, interfered, remarking that he was satisfied with the equipments, and should in-



sist on mounting the horse as he was. Perceiving from the colonel's quiet and decisive manner that further objection or expostulation would be useless, the Honorable Pestyfog dissembled his vexation. Marion was already in her seat, and Allerton leaped into his saddle without difficulty. Waving a salute to the Honorable gentleman, the lovers rode away, giving him the additional annoyance of seeing Bucephalus behave with laudable propriety. He found, however, much consolation in the thought that his horse was as treacherous as himself, and would soon justify his owner's confidence in his vicious propensities.

As soon as the riders were out of sight, the Honorable Mr. Clappergong called for a horse, and spurred him at full speed to the neighboring encampment, to demand a troop, by the aid of which he would perform a very important service. Immediately after his disappearance, Cass set out for the rendezvous where he was to meet the two officers. Bulldon was already on his way thither, having, while Marion was singing, contrived to leave the house unperceived, carrying, besides their pistols, a rifle for himself and one for Allerton. He had found them in the house, which was plentifully supplied with arms.

Any stranger who might have seen Marion and her cavalier, as they rode away from the mansion, and for some little time afterwards, would have thought her horse the more fiery and dangerous of the two. Although perfectly trained, he was spirited and restless; not a little proud, too, of his rider, who managed him with consummate ease, grace, and fearlessness, and not a little exhilarated, as it seemed, by the honor of carrying her. The charger which Allerton rode moved at a slow pace,—for the riders were satisfied to saunter, at first,—and with such gentleness and docility as would have thrown an inexperienced horseman off his guard.



After they had gone in this way for, perhaps, half a mile, Marion proposed to ride faster, and Allerton touched his horse's flanks softly; but, instead of quickening his pace, the beast planted his feet and stood stock-still, trying, at the same time, to take the bit in his teeth and put down his head. The bridle was too hard for him, however, thanks to the foresight of Cass. Allerton applied his spurs with vigor, producing no other effect than to make the animal perform a series of the most trying demivolts. His rider then sought to soothe him with hand and voice, but without success. Perceiving that the contest was to be one for the mastery, the colonel examined more carefully the whip which Cass had brought him. The thong, not very long or large, was weighty, and concealed by a silver whistle at the end of the handle was a heavy charge of lead. Gathering the bridle still more firmly in his hand, Allerton brought the whip down upon the brute's shoulder with all the strength of his right arm, and, at the same time, drove home his spurs. With a snort the horse sprang rearing in the air, and attempted to run; but the curb was pressed fiercely against his jaw, and he was forced to yield. He went back now to his demivolts, plunging, and, from time to time, trying to rear. But, as often as he began to rise, Allerton frustrated the movement by suddenly drawing the animal's head on one side, and at the same time using his spurs vigorously, thus causing the horse to lose his balance. The beast fairly groaned with rage and pain; his ears were laid back so as to be scarcely visible; his mouth was open and foaming, his nostrils distended, and his eyes glaring savagely. He made vain efforts to seize his rider's leg in his teeth. Allerton saw that he could be tamed neither by persuasion nor ordinary punishment. He turned the whip, grasped it at a convenient



distance from the loaded end, and waited for the next attempt to rear. The forefeet of the horse had just left the ground when the heavy butt of the whip-handle fell like a thunderbolt, striking him fairly between the ears. He went down on his knees with his nose in the dust, stunned and helpless. For a moment he made no effort to rise; then, regaining his feet, with his neck still drooping, he drew a long breath, and shook his head slowly, as if a doubt had entered his mind. Presently, seeming to collect himself, he again laid back his ears and started to run. Making no attempt to check him, the colonel brought the whip smartly across his flanks and urged him forward with voice and heel. The horse swept along the road like a tornado, hardly appearing to touch the ground in his wild leaps. After awhile, as his rider yet sternly hurried him on, he seemed to suspect that he was getting the worst of the game, and showed an inclination to slacken his pace; but still whip and spur implacably urged him on. Seeing, at length, however, that the animal was really distressed, Allerton drew rein and ordered him to stop. He obeyed the command promptly. His breast and shoulders were covered with flakes of foam, and perspiration ran from his flanks and dropped from his belly like a shower. Turning his horse's head, the colonel rode back to meet Marion, who had followed him, but not at so swift or wild a pace as his own. Indeed, Bucephalus had demonstrated that he possessed the qualities of a successful racer,—great speed and power of endurance. Not satisfied with ready obedience, Allerton put the horse through his paces, as he approached Marion, with relentless hand and heel. Bucephalus had found and humbly acknowledged his master.

Marion did not compliment Allerton. She was too proud of, and for, him. Besides, he had done nothing



more than she expected of her lover. But there was something in her glowing, smiling face and brilliant eyes which seemed to say, "I knew it;" a look of generous triumph. A poet would perhaps say, if he dared, that the light of love's bonfires was in her eyes, and that ruddy flags for victory were thrown out upon her cheeks. Near where they were was a mossy bank, and Allerton proposed that they should dismount and let their overheated horses, particularly his own, breathe a little. But to give rest to the animals was not his only object. He had to tell Marion that he must leave her; and it seemed to him that the pain of the announcement would be softened if he could make it while sitting by her side and holding her hand in his own.

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## CHAPTER VI.

LOVE AND POLITICS—HORSE AND HORSE—FLIGHT AND PURSUIT.

THERE, on the mossy bank, with her head on his shoulder, his arm around her, and her hand in his, had Allerton, in a low and tender voice, told Marion that the time for their separation had come; that he must go again to the battle-field. She listened silently. The look of triumph, which she had felt for him, all died out of her sweet face, the bright light out of her soft eyes. She pressed his hand, and her head rested more heavily upon his shoulder.

"Have you nothing to say, my darling?" asked he, pressing his lips to her forehead.

"What can I say?" replied she, in a troubled voice.



"I know that you must go, and that it would be wrong if I should try to detain you longer."

"But you told Colonel Clappergong that I was not yet sufficiently recovered to go," said Allerton, smiling.

"Yes," returned she, "because I would not allow him to believe that I could think you deficient, or derelict, in any respect."

"And you have thought me so, then?"

"I will not say that. I thought it just possible that you might not feel so much ardor as I, and that perhaps—I say perhaps—you liked to stay here with me—ah, don't, now! But I had faith in you, as I always shall have, and believed that you had good reasons for your delay."

"Then you have wanted me to go away?"

"Oh, that, as you say it, is unkind. I have wanted you to go back to the army as soon as you could properly do so; because I loved you, and because I loved the cause for which you are fighting. I loved you too well to feel willing that you should stay behind the foremost of our defenders. I will not do you, nor myself, the wrong to suppose it necessary for me to say that parting from you is the greatest sorrow I ever had. But it would be a greater to believe that you would remain absent from the post of duty one moment longer than, in your best judgment, were necessary. I thought I had made sacrifices before; but they were all as nothing when compared with giving you up; sending you, as it were, to encounter all the dangers——"

Here the brave girl's voice trembled so that she suddenly stopped speaking, and hid her face on Allerton's breast. He bent his head and kissed her bright hair, saying, in a soothing voice, "There! there!" as a mother might try to comfort her sorrowing child.

Then they sat for some minutes in silence. They could



not trust themselves to speak. Besides the pain of this parting, Allerton had other and heavy griefs, as yet unknown to Marion. Meanwhile the horses bit at the grass, and at the tender branches of trees and shrubs, which were within their reach.

At length Marion looked up, trying to smile, and blushing through tears. Taking a tiny pair of scissors from a small case which she drew from her pocket, she put up her little hands and cut off a lock of Allerton's hair, the tears gaining the mastery, and driving the smile entirely from her face, as she folded the dear remembrancer and placed it in her bosom. The young officer looked at her for a moment, his own eyes suffused, then clasped her to his heart in an agony of love, sorrow, and self-reproach. How could he ever find courage to deceive this loving child? How justify himself to this patriotic and high-spirited woman? How dare, not only to repel the love, but invite the detestation, of this adored sweetheart?

Gently disengaging herself, Marion placed a small book, her own little Bible, in which was a lock of her hair, in Allerton's hands, saying, "Wear this on your heart. It may save your life here and hereafter."

He kissed the book reverently and put it in his bosom.

"Let us ride," said he, for he knew what he had to do, and time was pressing. He placed Marion on her horse, then mounted Bucephalus, applied his spurs, and made the steed show his paces, which he did with ready obedience. Then they sauntered along side by side in the solitary road.

"Tell me, sweetheart," said Allerton, "when did you first love me?"

"When I first saw you come to the house, pale and suffering. And I was very angry with your friend Bull-



don because he would allow no one to come near you but himself when you were most ill. He said you were delirious, and that it was better so."

"Doubtless he was right," suggested Allerton, who knew very well the excellent reasons which induced Bull-don, by great self-sacrifice, to prevent the approach of any person, to whom the insane ravings of the sick man might have betrayed them.

"Had you seen me in my madness," he continued, "you might have known me better, and never loved me."

"I do not think so," said she. "I would have charmed away the delirium and soothed you to repose."

"As holy beings and holy things frighten away the devil," said he. "Yes, my angel, you are good enough for that."

Then they rode a little way in silence, and their horses walked side by side. The hands of the lovers were clasped in each other, and only their eyes spoke.

Presently Allerton said,—

"Did I ever tell you the story of a friend of mine, who met and loved a lady somewhat as I met and loved you, only he was unfortunate and unhappy, while I am fortunate and—blessed?" And he pressed his lips to the small hand which he held in his own.

"No. Tell it me, please," said Marion.

"My friend was severely wounded and taken prisoner in one of the battles gained by the enemy. With others captured in the same fight,—among whom was one of his intimate friends, a brother officer, also wounded, but not so severely as himself,—he was sent under guard towards the interior. But on the way his wound was so much aggravated by exposure and fatigue that the escort was forced to leave him, and his friend to care for him, in charge of a non-commissioned officer and two men.



This officer was a kind-hearted fellow, and passed much of his time with the prisoners, whose society beguiled the wearisomeness of his duty. They sounded him, and found that he was insensible neither to the claims of humanity nor the charms of a bribe. In short, he agreed to aid them in effecting their escape. The better to accomplish this, he obtained, on some pretext, two uniforms, and arms, such as were worn by officers of their rank in the army to which he belonged. Then, on a given night, while one of the men, whose appetite for strong drink they well knew, was on duty as sentry, one of the prisoners, watching his opportunity, called this sentinel, and, thanking him for the courtesy which had been shown to the captives, presented him with a bottle of brandy. In a short time the man was helplessly drunk. Then the prisoners went to the quarter of the officer, who, of course, made no resistance, and bound him strongly, tying a handkerchief over his mouth, in such a way that it should not seriously incommode him, and could be displaced without difficulty. They then fell upon the other soldier, who was sound asleep, and gagged and tied him securely. They had already put on the uniforms and taken the arms provided for them, and at once left the place. They wandered a great part of the night, till the exhaustion of the more severely wounded officer compelled them to halt, and seek such repose as could be found beneath the protection of some trees, which grew near together. In the morning they discovered a laborer's cottage not far off, at which they asked for food, and, while partaking of a simple breakfast, learned from the good people in the house where they were, and also that there had been a skirmish in the neighborhood the previous day. On this information they based their plan. Before the war my friend had been somewhat familiar



with that part of the country, and also with the names of the prominent inhabitants. They determined to go to the country-house of a distinguished gentleman, who was known to be absent, and represent themselves as officers, who, having been on detached duty for some time, were returning to their respective commands when they, unexpectedly, fell in with a small body of their own forces, and were wounded in a skirmish with a reconnoitering-party of the enemy.

“It required some ingenuity, and much coolness and self-possession, to carry this plan safely into operation; but they succeeded. My friend was worn out with excitement, fatigue, and suffering when they reached the hospitable dwelling where they proposed to remain till strong enough to effect their escape across the lines, and where they felt sure of a kindly welcome and every needful attention, should their story be believed. And they argued, correctly enough, that its hardihood would make it appear credible. In this they were not disappointed. Those of the gentleman’s family who were at home received the wounded officers and treated them with every care and kindness, never for a moment doubting the truth of their representations. But the strain on my poor friend’s strength had been too great. He was attacked by, and lay for days in the power of, a violent fever. When convalescent, he began to perceive that he was the object of unremitting kindness and delicate, sympathizing attention from the loveliest being he had ever seen. She was the daughter of the gentleman whose mansion they had so boldly invaded. This was like our meeting: was it not, dearest?”

“Oh, do not stop. Keep quiet, please, and tell me the rest. Did he fall in love with her, and she with him?”

“Just as we did, darling. And they swore always to



love each other, and that nothing should, or could, put an end to their affection."

"Just like us, too."

"Yes. But at length my friend, thanks to her dear care and tenderness, was well again, and felt that he must go back to his friends and his duty. His companion had already been made impatient by their delay. He was miserable at the thought of leaving her, and yet could not, even for her sake, be false to the cause which he had sworn to support, and in which both his heart and his honor were engaged."

"What did he do?"

"They formed a plan to escape to their lines and rejoin their friends; and when they were all ready to leave, and the day had arrived for their departure, he told her the whole truth and asked her to go with him. Now, what did she do?"

"Was married to and came with him, of course. What else could she do? They are clearly in the wrong, and she could not do better than to leave them and come to us."

Allerton's heart bounded as he heard this reply.

"But," said he, "she believed as confidently in the justness of their cause as we do in that of ours."

"That makes no difference. If she loved him truly, she should have come with him. Or, if she could not do that, they might have arranged it in some way, so that she should join him as his wife before long. It is so cruel to be separated!"

Allerton looked at his companion with inexpressible tenderness and devotion; but he did not speak. He feared to go on, lest he might, with one word, destroy the blissful hope which filled his heart.

"Well," said Marion, "you do not tell me. What did she do?"



"I do not know," said Allerton.

"You do not know?" repeated Marion.

"No. But you shall tell me. Oh, Marion," exclaimed he, passionately, "forgive me! I never thought to deceive you——"

"Deceive me!" echoed she, looking bewildered.

"Yes, deceive you, Marion."

"What do you mean?" she asked, turning pale.

"The story that I have told is of myself. I do not belong to your party. I——"

"And you have dared this imposition?" said she, drawing herself up, while her eyes flashed with anger and indignation. She looked superb, almost terrible,—quite terrible to poor Allerton.

"And you, sir, a skulking spy, have presumed to make me the dupe of your tricks, of your falsehoods. You have well represented your fellows,—but you shall not rejoin them,—no, sir, not even if a woman must capture you! Away!" she cried, quivering with anger, as Allerton reached out his hand as if to take her own, and, turning her horse's head, she gave him, in her excitement, a violent blow with her riding-whip. He was a thoroughbred, high-spirited creature, that would not bear the lash. The moment he felt the whip, he gave a wild bound, partially unseating his mistress, and made off at a furious pace in the direction from which they had come. In vain efforts to regain her seat, Marion completely lost control of him; for he had now become frightened by the unusual position and action of his rider, all of whose strength only sufficed to keep her from being thrown by the terrific leaps of the flying horse. Allerton was coming on behind her with the speed of the wind, for, the instant that he perceived the true state of the case, he had started in full chase. He was greatly alarmed,



but determined to rescue her from impending death, should Bucephalus not again rebel. The horses were nearly equal in speed, and Marion's had the start, too much the start. But Allerton's was the stronger. Marion uttered no cry, no sound. Bucephalus seemed to understand the affair. At any rate, he needed no urging. With his head stretched forward and his belly to the ground, he appeared almost to fly. But the space between the horses did not seem to diminish. For some distance it was as if the racers were evenly matched. A sickening feeling of impotence and desperation was creeping over Allerton. He used whip and spur without mercy, almost without thought. Yes, he is beginning to gain in the pursuit. Marion's horse is now but a short way ahead. But he runs well. They are nearing a sharp turn in the road. Allerton is only a few yards behind. Marion's horse springs abruptly round the turn; she is thrown over upon his right side, but yet clings desperately with both hands. Still no sound escapes her lips. It is evident that she cannot retain her hold a minute longer. Bucephalus is doing wonders; but he must do a little more. Again fresh blood answers to the pressure of the spur. With a groan the horse seems to gather up his strength for the last desperate struggle, and lengthens his fearful leaps. His head laps the right flank of the fugitive. Another and another hard pressure of the heel; a few more desperate leaps, and his head is by that of the brave girl. Once more, good horse, once more; and Allerton's arm is about the waist of the woman,—a giant's strength swells that left arm.

"Free your foot from the stirrup," says he, as, for an instant, the horses are madly running side by side. Allerton rises in his stirrups, and that worthy left arm bears Marion, fainting, to his saddle-bow. He checked his



horse's speed, caressed and soothed him with his voice, and brought him to a standstill, loath enough to give up the race just in the moment of victory.

Casting his eyes around to see if any help were near, Allerton perceived five or six horsemen riding towards him at full speed from the direction of General Devray's mansion. They were yet some way off, but he could see that all wore uniforms except one, and that one, he felt sure, was the Honorable Mr. Clappergong. He doubted not for an instant that he and Bulldon were pursued. Dismounting at once, he laid the insensible girl tenderly down on the soft grass by the roadside, remounted his horse, and, looking again at the approaching troop, who were near enough to observe his movements, put spurs to Bucephalus, whose powers of endurance now stood him well in stead.

Away sped the hapless lover, now a fugitive. He could not help distinguishing, in the midst of all the tumult of his emotions, a feeling of admiration, mingled with a kind of tenderness, for the brave beast which he bestrode, that had so nobly vindicated his title to respect, notwithstanding the outrageous conduct by which he resisted oppression and subjugation and strove to preserve his independence. The good fellow was again sweeping the highway, encouraged by the hand and voice of his rider; this time towards the rendezvous. Before passing the turn in the road, Allerton looked back and saw that the horsemen were spurring hard after him. On reaching a rising ground, some distance beyond, he again turned his head, and saw, what he had calculated upon, that they had come to a halt at the place where he had left Marion; that the Honorable Mr. Clappergong and one of the soldiers had dismounted and bent over the prostrate form for a moment, and then that the four men who had not left their sad-



dles rode on once more in hot pursuit. Yet the space between the fugitive and his followers had been increased by their delay, and his horse, in spite of the exertions that he had already made, was greatly superior to those which they rode. He was confident, therefore, of gaining the rendezvous in safety. But, as it happened, the large oak-tree, where he was to meet his friends, stood some way from the edge of the wood. Bulldon and Cass were waiting for him there, for it was already past the hour appointed for their meeting, and he could now see them looking, with apparent anxiety, at him and his pursuers, who were again in sight. His allies were making to him signs of fear or encouragement. Looking back, he saw, to his dismay, that the party from whom he was fleeing were no longer following him straight forward, but had turned their course, with the evident intention of coming between the oak and the wood, and thus cutting off the retreat of those whom they were seeking to catch. He might, probably, save himself by taking the course which they thus indicated, and running right for the forest; but he could not harbor for a moment the thought of forsaking his friends. He only urged his horse a little more impatiently towards the tree. Turning his head once more to look at his enemies, he heard the sudden crack of a rifle, and saw the foremost man of them throw up his arms and fall backward from his horse. In a moment after another report was heard, and the next fastest horse engaged in the chase ran riderless. Bulldon had made good use of General Devray's rifles. The two remaining troopers, excited by the hunt and the fall of their comrades, pressed courageously forward, and seemed likely to gain their point, by putting themselves between the tree and the edge of the forest, and at the same time winning the cover of the wood, when again a rifle made its sharp, clear discharge, and one of the



soldiers fell prone on his horse's neck and then tumbled heavily to the ground. His fellow, thereupon, suddenly reined up his steed, turned, and fled from the field.

"I did not want to hurt those faithful hounds," said Bulldon, as Allerton dismounted from his reeking charger, "but there was no help for it."

The masterless horses were easily caught. Their late riders were found to be dead, when examined by the friends with the humane purpose of giving them such aid as might be practicable. Their arms were taken from them and divided among the conquerors, or rather among the conqueror and his friends; for Bulldon alone achieved the victory. He then mounted one of the captured horses, and Cass another. Cass also undertook to lead the third, saying that they might yet find a use for him. Allerton was determined not to part with his trusty Bucephalus if he could help it. And, thus mounted and equipped, they took their way into the forest, and disappeared just as the last twilight was fading out of the sky.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### REGRET.

WHEN the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong, with the troop in chase of the two officers, reached the spot where Allerton had left Miss Devray, he was surprised and alarmed by her appearance. She was deathly pale and still insensible. He at once alighted, and, asking one of the men to stay and help him, began to apply such restoratives as he could think of and command. He chafed her hands and her temples, and applied to them the broad



leaves of a shrub that grew near by, which were already moist with the falling dew. Presently she began to show signs of returning animation ; but it was yet some minutes before she recovered from the swoon into which she had fallen. Allerton and those of his pursuers who had continued their course were already out of sight and hearing. When consciousness returned, Marion exclaimed, wildly,—

“Where is he? where is he? Is he safe?” The Honorable Pestyfog turned a little wan and compressed his thin lips unconsciously as he heard this passionate outcry.

“Of whom do you speak?” asked he, coldly.

“Tell me, is he safe?” returned she, imperiously.

“He will be soon, I trust,” said the Honorable gentle man, with a chilling, though almost imperceptible, sneer.

“What do you mean?” demanded she, anxiously, frightened by the Honorable Pestyfog’s manner ; a manner rather to be felt than seen.

“He cannot escape,” replied the Honorable Mr. Clap-  
pergong.

“Escape ! From what?” asked she, still more alarmed.

“From his pursuers,” answered he.

“Who is pursuing him? What for? What has he done?” She was now very much excited by apprehensions of evil.

“He has accomplished nothing, I am confident ; only tried,” responded the patriot.

“Tell me what you mean. For Heaven’s sake, explain yourself!” said she.

“I mean that ‘the colonel,’” emphasizing the appellation, “is a traitor and a spy——”

“It is false !” cried Marion, interrupting him, while a flush of indignation drove all the lingering paleness from her face.



“And is now seeking to escape to the enemy with such knowledge of our situation and movements as he has been able to obtain,” continued the Honorable gentleman, coolly.

“I tell you it is false, sir!” retorted she,—“a suspicion and accusation which could only come from one base enough to be guilty himself of the acts alleged. Please, sir, to bring me my horse,” added she, with forced calmness, to the trooper.

The animal, after running some way, had stopped, turned back to, and was now standing near, his mistress, with drooping head and smoking flanks. The man did as requested. The Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong came forward to help Marion into the saddle. She seemed not to notice him, but said to the man,—

“If you will now be kind enough to help me up. Thank you.”

The Honorable Mr. Clappergong mounted also, and moved to take his place by her side. The soldier fell back. She turned, however, and again said to him,—

“I must beg you to accompany me.” The man rode up and took his post upon one side of her, while the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong, gnawing his lips with spite and vexation, held his position on the other. Thus they rode, in silence, to General Devray’s mansion.

The Honorable Mr. Clappergong had never seen Marion so strikingly beautiful. She was pale; and the trouble which she felt, in spite of all her efforts to conceal it, gave an unusually tender and sad expression to her countenance. Her eyes looked larger even than was their wont; the pupils were dilated, and an extraordinary light burned softly in their dark depths. Her delicate nostril was tremulous with emotion; and she held her bridle and whip with a kind of convulsive grasp. Her luxuriant



hair was partially disheveled, and waved gracefully on her neck and shoulders. She looked right before her, without, apparently, regarding anything.

Arrived at the mansion, she went straightway to her room, and sank into a seat, moaning, rather than exclaiming,—

“Oh, what have I done? what have I done?”

She ordered Cass to be summoned. He was nowhere to be found.

“But you must find him and bring him to me at once,” said she, sternly, to the servant.

As the man left the room, she fell upon her knees, and, bowing her head upon the cushions of a sofa before her, cried out, in a plaintive, broken voice,—

“What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### FOREST AND NIGHT—MOURNING—THE HUNT.

FOR some length the wood, into which Allerton and his companions had gone, was easily pierced. The trees were tall and rather sparse, and the lower part of their trunks free from branches. But soon the forest became more dense. Rank wild vines twined from tree to tree, and, with a thick undergrowth of bushes, very much hindered and at times almost stayed the course of the fugitives. Cass, however, who led the way, pushed on resolutely, bowing himself upon his horse's neck, or clinging on his sides, to avoid the boughs and hanging vines. The little remaining light was shut out by the foliage; and



the officers were obliged to trust wholly to the skill and fidelity of their guide and the instincts of their horses. After awhile they came to a shallow rivulet, into which they urged their steeds, and followed Cass up the stream, where the water rarely came above their horses' knees. This turn not only secured them a more open way, but effectually hid their track from pursuers, should the attempt to follow and take them be renewed.

While the horses, with heads stretched forward, were snorting, and scenting their way, bearing their riders towards a place of safety, a curious scene was going on in another part of the forest. There a circular space, some yards in diameter, had been cleared of underbrush, which, piled up at the circumference, formed a kind of hedge. A couple of torches, stuck in the ground on either side of this space, gave a fitful but sufficiently bright light. A party of men, poorly clad, but with grotesque effect, whose faces were as black as that of the night itself, were grouped together in the place thus cleared and lighted. They were captives, held in bondage by the laws of the country where these things came to pass. Some were leaning against the neighboring trees, some seated on the ground, and some lying at full length, supporting their heads upon a prop made by resting the elbow of one arm on the earth, while the hand served for a pillow. One of the number was addressing the others.

“Breddern,” said he, “we mus’ tink ’fore we do. Some folks tinks after dey do, an’ den dey tinks berry bad; an’ all dere bad tinkin’ don’t den do no good. We’s all come here ter tink an’ ter talk. We’s all breddern; an’ we don’t know wat ter do. So we come here ter ’cuss it. Some says we ought ter go ’way to de enemy,—dat de enemy is our frien’s. Some tinks dat we ought ter kill our massas an’ our missuses, an’ some b’leve we ought ter



do needer, but jes' work as if der wasn't de earthquake, an' de storm, an' de tunder all 'bout us a shakin', an' a blowin', an' a knockin' all tings inter jes' one ting. Well, dat's what I tink. Wat for we be here in dis lan'? 'Cause de good Lor' want us ter be here. Now, if you boys 'sposes dat de biggest mule-team you ever seed could drag us 'way from whar we be if de good Lor' didn't mean we should come, den you's mighty green, dat's all. Dar's Pete, jes' he go an' hitch up his big team ter dat yar oak-tree, an' he couldn't move him. 'Cause wy? 'Cause de good Lor' mean dat dat yar tree mus' grow dar an' hab leabes dar, an' hab acorns dar, an' nowhar else; dat's wy. Now, wat de good Lor' mean is jes' right; dar ain't no doubt 'bout dat, an' it's no use 'cussin' it. An' if de good Lor' mean dat we stay here an' work, jes' as we allers hab, we mus' do dat. An' if He mean dat we ought ter go ter de enemy, den de enemy come an' fetch us. But de enemy don't come an' fetch us. He sometime sen' bad boys back dat runs 'way ter him. Well, wat for he do dat? 'Cause de good Lor' mean we ought ter stay here. An' if de enemy be our frien's, wat for he sen' us back? 'Cause he don't want us ter do dat wat de good Lor' don't mean. An' wat for de enemy he make us work, as dey say, if he be our frien'? 'Cause he ain't our frien'; dat's wy. No, breddern, jes' we stay whar we is, an' do de work dat we mus', an' let de good Lor' hab his own way. Dat's wat I tink."

The group, which had listened attentively to this speech, remained silent at its close. After a pause of a few minutes, another of the company stepped forward to reply.

"Dis yere Bill," said he, "want us all ter b'leve dat he know wat de good Lor' mean. How he know dat? Wat good Lor' do he talk 'bout? Dis yere Bill can't read.



Now, breddern, de Book tell us 'bout de real good Lor'. An' wat do de Book say? 'By de ribber ob Babbbleum dar sot we down. We weep wen we remember Zium.' Dat's wat de Book say. Now, who make de Book say dat? Wy, de prophet ob de good Lor'; he make him say dat. Well, who be de prophet? Wy, he be de man dat tell wat's gwine ter be; de man dat, wen he was dumped inter de coal-kiln, wouldn't burn; de man dat was trowed inter de den ob lions, an' was ser tough dat de lions couldn't eat him; de man dat cried so, 'cause de people was bad, dat big ribbers, as big as de biggest ribber you ebber seed, run out ob his eyes an' washed 'way an' drownded ebbery durned one ob um. Now, wen de prophet talk 'bout de ribber ob Babbbleum, wat he mean? Wy, he mean dis yere little ribber jes' ober dar. 'Cause why? 'Cause de little ribber ober dar make a noise; an' dat's wy he call him Babbbleum. An' who he mean wen he say we: 'dar sot we down'? Wy, he mean us, ob course; we boys. Don't we sot down by dat ribber wen ebber we can git dar? An' don't we weep wen we remembers Zium? Ob course we does. Wat be Zium? Wy, Zium, he be de whip. Dat's clar. Don't he say dat ebbery time? Z—ium. Dat's wat he say. Dere's dat yar Sam ober dar; he know. He git him yesterday. Now, wat else do de Book say? He say, if dy right han' hurt yer, cut him off an' trow him 'way; an' if dy right eye hurt yer, pull him out an' trow him 'way. An' dat mean we. Wen de Book say dat, he talk ter us. Now, is not de massa our right han'? An' de missus, ain't she our right eye? An' don't dey hurt us? Den wat mus' we do? Wy, cut him off, an' trow him 'way; an' pull her out, an' trow her 'way. But 'spose we can't do dat, wat we do den? Wy, we jes' cut ourselbes, an' trow ourselbes 'way ter de enemy; dat's all. An' dat's wat I tink, breddern."

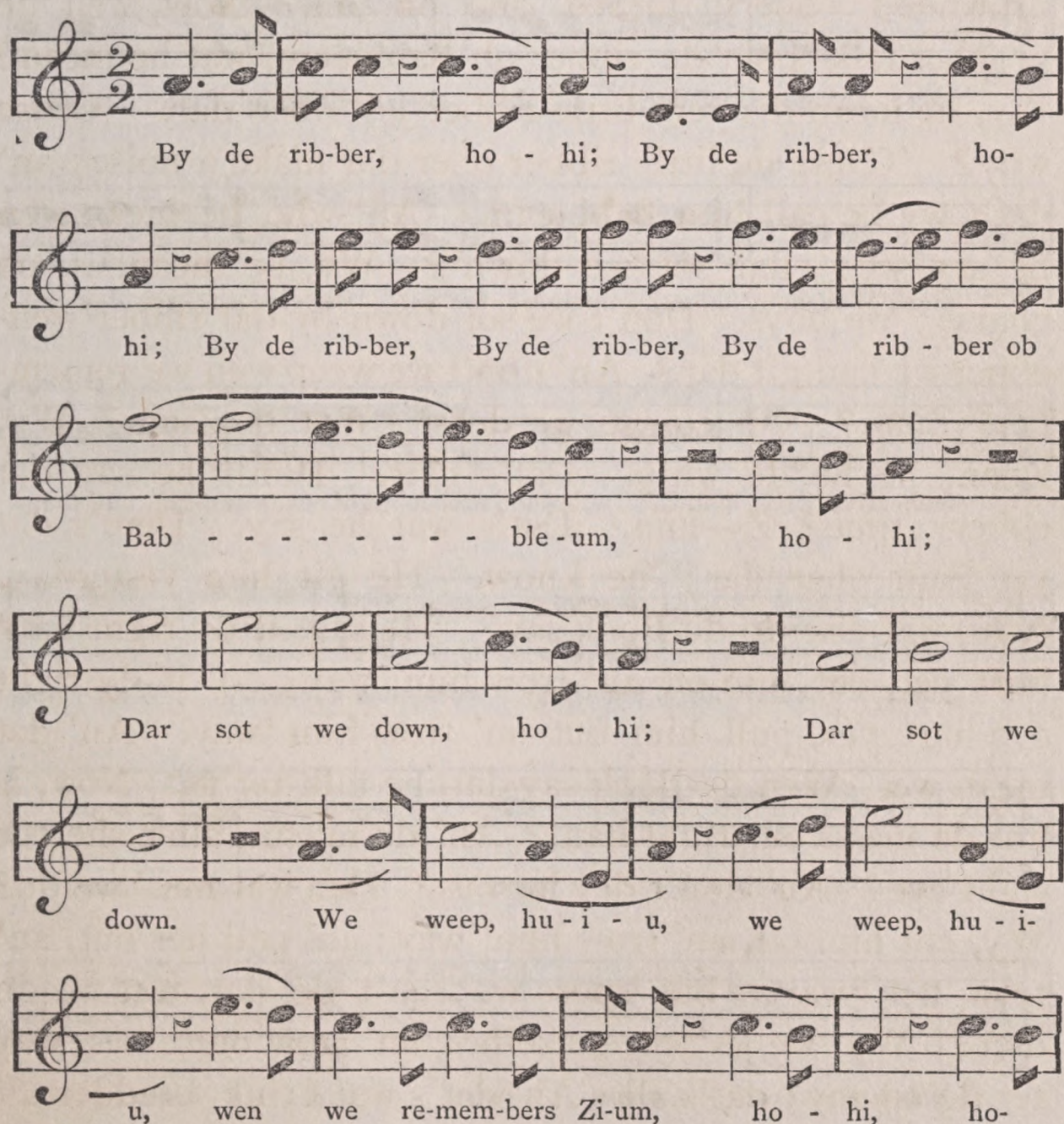


“Dat’s it ! dat’s it !” exclaimed several, as all the members of the group seemed to change their positions, and fell to talking with one another.

“But, breddern,” presently said Cicero, the orator who had last spoken, “it’s time for de rites ter begin. It’s time ter sot down by de ribber an’ weep. Take up de mournin’. De breddern will sing my hymn, an’ brudder Julius will start de tune. All you boys jes’ come ober here, an’ sot down on dis side, by de ribber.”

In obedience to Cicero’s directions, the men ranged themselves on the side of the circle nearest the rivulet.

This is the tune and these the words which they sang :



By de rib-ber, ho - hi; By de rib-ber, ho-

hi; By de rib-ber, By de rib-ber, By de rib - ber ob

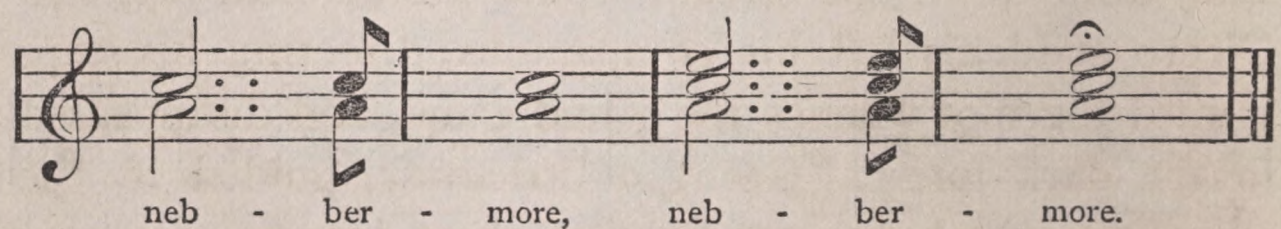
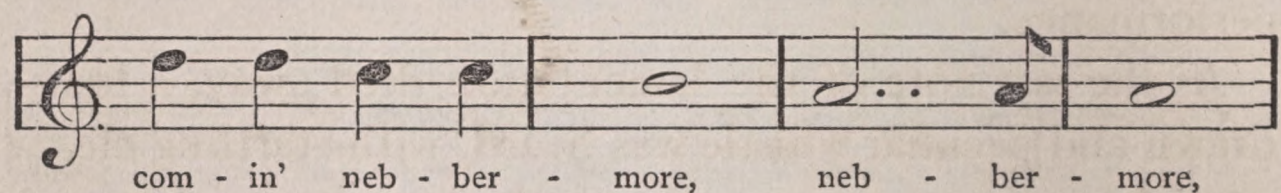
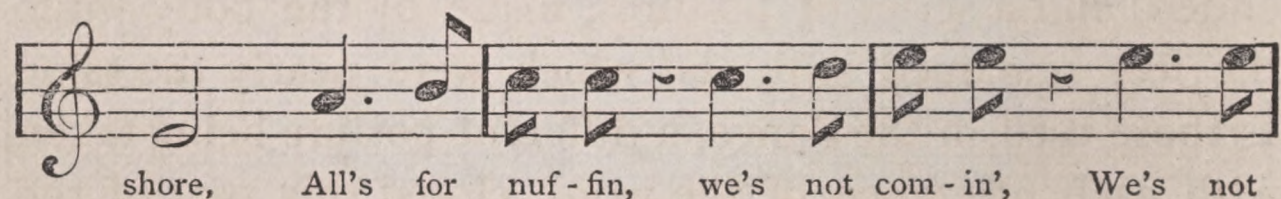
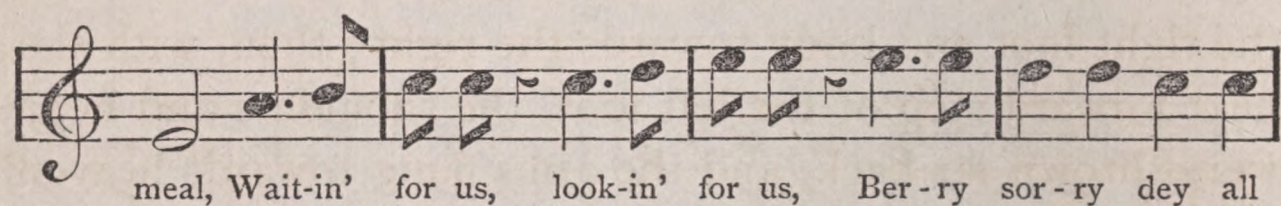
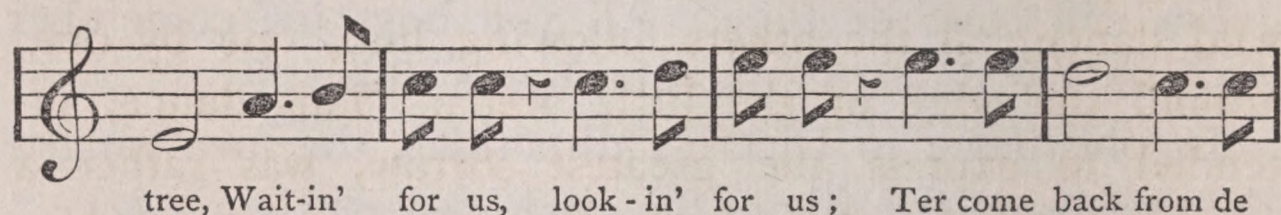
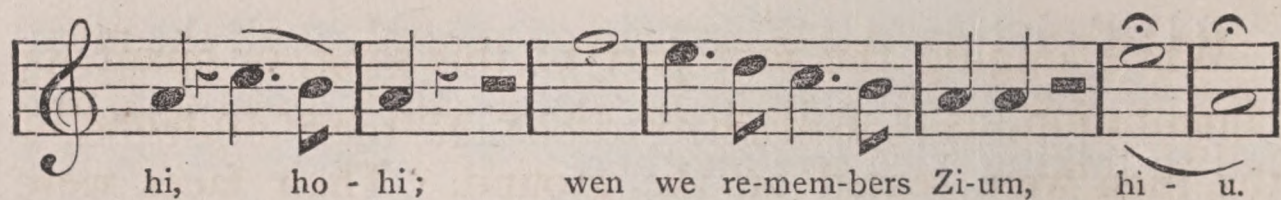
Bab - - - - - ble - um, ho - hi;

Dar sot we down, ho - hi; Dar sot we

down. We weep, hu - i - u, we weep, hu - i-

u, wen we re-mem-bers Zi-um, ho - hi, ho-







While singing the first part of this song, or chant, or lamentation, as it shall please those who hear to name it, the men were seated on the ground. Their faces were made to wear a sad and dejected look, and with a slow, swaying movement of their bodies they marked the rhythm of the music. But when they had begun to sing the second part, their leader arose and commenced a strange, wild dance, all the others following him, one by one, around the edge of the little arena. This dance, intended to express the greatest sorrow, was rather a movement of the whole body, than of any part or member of it. The motions were comparatively slow, but exaggerated, and consisted chiefly of a long step with the left foot, accompanied with the plunging of the body and arms somewhat to the left; then a similar movement with the right foot and body towards the right; then, with the next forward step of the left foot, the shoulders and head were thrown far back, and the arms flung towards heaven leftward; and then a like movement with the right foot and whole body towards the right, the dancers continuing to sing all the time. When they came to the repetition of the word "nebbermore," their forward movement ended, and a series of postures, made by the body while the feet remained still, and which were nearly the same as those used in the dance, a different posture being taken with each utterance of the word, closed this part of the performance.

As the last note of the lamentation died away, a long-drawn and peculiar whistle was heard, with startling clearness, from down the stream which flowed near by, and Cicero suddenly left his companions, directing his steps toward the spot whence the sound came, and disappeared in the dark forest. Going a little way, guided by the whistling, which was repeated at short intervals, he met



Cass, who, somewhat in advance of his charge, had come to a halt.

“Who dar?” demanded Cicero, in a low voice.

“Me, Cass, and de oders,” replied the party questioned, and then asked, “Is’t all right, brudder Cicero?”

“Yah, it’s all right, ’cept dat yar Bill’s dar. But, den, he won’t do nuffin’, ’cause he’ll tink dat if dey oughtn’t ter go back, de good Lor’ ’ll stop um. ’Sides, we’s ’nuf ter take car ob him.”

“Den I commit dese yere gemmen ter yer, an’ de Lor’ ’ll hold yer’ spons’ble fur eb’ry hair ob dere heads.” Then, turning to Allerton and his comrade, Cass continued: “Dis yere’s Cicero, a good frien’. He know great deal, an’ lead you gemmen all right. Good-by, Massa Colonel, good-by, Massa Cap’n; hopes yer’ll get safe troo.” And then, after receiving the warm thanks of the two friends, and a liberal fee for his services, which he was unwilling to accept, but which was forced upon him, Cass handed over the led horse and the arms which he carried to Cicero, and took his way homeward, to account for his absence, if need should be, by saying that he had been at a love-feast,—a religious festival of the Methodists, which he had a general permission to attend.

Cicero led the officers to the place where he had left his fellows. There they alighted and ate a bountiful supper, provided by their new guide and his assistants.

After resting a short time, and supplying themselves with such provisions as they could conveniently carry, they again set forward, under the lead of Cicero, who, bidding those whom he had lately addressed good-by, said to Bill, his antagonist in the discussion,—

“If I nebber comes back, brudder Bill, dat’ll be ’cause de good Lor’ want me ter be on t’oder side.”

And, with those so solemnly placed under his care by



Cass, he went into the obscurity of the night and of the forest.

Presently they struck a bridle-path, and thereafter proceeded with greater convenience and dispatch. But, with all the haste that could be made, they did not reach the limit of this wood, on the side nearest the hostile lines, till the light of early dawn was sufficient to render objects clearly visible.

Between this and another wood, farther on and still nearer the lines, in which the fugitives intended to conceal themselves during the coming day, was an open tract of country some two or three miles in breadth. About midway this open land was a hut, where, the officers were assured by Cicero, they could safely rest themselves and their horses. As no person was in sight, they decided to go at once to the hovel. They had ridden nearly half the length between the forest which they quitted and the cabin when Cicero, who was in advance, turned his head to say something to the officers, and suddenly cried out,—

“Oh, look, massa!—look! look!”

The gentlemen saw, in the direction indicated by their guide, a body of horse deploying from the border of the wood behind them, in which it had evidently lain in wait, and taking a position such as effectually to prevent their return to the shelter which they had just left.

“We must gain the other wood,” said Allerton; and, putting spurs to their horses, they rode swiftly a short distance that way, when they perceived another troop drawn up and waiting just at the edge of the trees before them. No sooner was the new danger discovered than they drew rein.

“Let us to the hut and defend ourselves as well as we can,” said Bulldon; and they rode quickly towards this covert. They had arrived within a short space of the cabin when Allerton saw, through an opening which,



without sash or glass, served as a window, the skulking form of one of the enemy's soldiers.

"Halt!" he cried. "They are hidden in that place too! Nothing is left us but to run for it."

They turned their horses' heads and set off in a course at right angles to that which they had been pursuing. Before they had gone a dozen yards on this new track, eight or ten men rushed from the hovel, leveled their muskets, and fired a volley at the fugitives. With a sharp cry Cicero sprang up in his stirrups and fell heavily to the ground. Bulldon clasped his hands to his head and slid an unresisting mass from the saddle. Bucephalus, which, though jaded, still bore Allerton bravely, reared for the last time, struck out wildly with his forefeet, and sunk, in a quivering heap, lifeless, with a bullet through his brain. Allerton disengaged himself and ran to Bulldon, who was lying motionless, but yet alive. The only wound visible was upon the side of his head, where a ball had struck and grazed, perhaps pierced, the skull. Cicero was bleeding fast from a hole in his breast. But it did not trouble him. The good Lord had, indeed, wanted him "on de oder side." He had crossed the invisible lines, beyond which there is no recapture. The poor fellow had acted faithfully, according to the best knowledge he owned. Unfortunately for him, and those whom he had undertaken to guide to a place of safety, he did not know that the Honorable Pestyfog Clapperpong had overheard and knew the plan and course which Allerton and Bulldon intended to follow; and that he had taken care, when he went for assistance to make the direct pursuit, to have a force sent forward, and posted so as to intercept the fugitives when they should emerge from the forest, in case his own party should fail to take them before they could gain the cover of the wood.



Allerton seemed to give no further thought to his adversaries. Escape was, indeed, impossible, and further effort plainly futile. He busied himself with vain essays to restore consciousness to Bulldon, until his pursuers came up. They at once arrested him, and began to search his person. To this indignity he submitted without remonstrance. His boots were taken off, even his stockings. Nothing was found, however, till a soldier picked up the boots for a second examination. Something about the leg attracted his attention; he felt it, took out his knife, ripped away the lining, and pulled out the drawings which had been deposited there by the Honorable Mr. Clapper-gong. Allerton was confounded. His enemies next searched Bulldon, then placed him, still unconscious, on a stretcher hastily prepared for the occasion, and set out to conduct him and Allerton to the nearest post.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### SISTERS OF CHARITY—WOUNDED.

THE same day on which Allerton and Bulldon left General Devray's house with the design of escaping to their friends, two women, clad in the peculiar garb of a religious order whose members devote their lives to acts of charity, made their appearance at the headquarters of the military department in which the events recounted in the preceding chapters took place, bearing letters of safe-conduct from the commander-in-chief of the enemy's forces; by which they were, also, particularly recommended to the kind attention of any officer of the opposite party to



whom they might present themselves. It was stated, in these letters, that the Sisters Mary and Marguerite desired to serve as nurses, especially at those hospitals and camps in which prisoners of war were confined; and the writer asked that their wishes might be granted, so far as should be consistent with the regulations established by the civil and military powers to whom the letters were addressed.

Before being permitted to come within the lines, the women had been subjected to a rigid, but courteous, examination, to make sure that they were not spies, and that they came for no purpose of war or politics; a proceeding rendered necessary and proper by the fact that all kinds of expedients were known to have been devised by both parties to obtain information of the plans, movements, and numbers of their antagonists.

The women's mien was very much in their favor and well calculated to hinder suspicion. The elder, Sister Mary, was, seemingly, about forty-five years of age. Her eyes were large and dark, but not black, and a sad yet mild and placid expression never, or rarely, left them. Her features were regular, and her face had that pure and spiritual look which so often distinguishes Sisters of Charity. Her hair, almost entirely concealed by the head-dress uniformly worn by her order, had been of a rich brown color, but was now thickly sprinkled with gray. Her voice, very soft and gentle, seemed to vibrate, almost insensibly, it is true, to the impulses of a constant, but hidden, though not wholly-mastered sorrow.

Sister Marguerite was much younger than her companion. She looked to be not more than eighteen or nineteen years old, and was very fair. On her face, too, were marks of grief, as well as of anxiety and weariness, which added to the interest that her appearance could not fail at all times to excite.



They were conducted to the neighboring hospital, in which many sick and wounded prisoners were cared for, and left free to practice their pious avocation. They also obtained permission to pass from place to place without let or hinderance, for which they seemed very grateful. Waiting not to rest or refresh themselves in any way, they at once began to make the rounds of the infirmary, saying a kind word of sympathy and encouragement here, asking a friendly question there, adjusting the pillows of one sufferer, fanning or bathing the fevered brow of another, and giving drink to a third. Those who observed them closely noticed a kind of nervous eagerness, particularly in the elder, as they approached each cot, which would give place to a marble-like calmness and the look of those who have learned to endure, without show of repining, even the wasting pains of hope deferred.

When they had made the entire circuit of the hospital, the younger said significantly to the other,—

“Not here.”

“Perhaps he has been discharged. We must look at the reports.”

But after carefully examining the lists of patients that were or had been in the place,—

“No,” said the elder, “he has not been here, unless under an assumed name.”

They seated themselves apart, and for some time talked in a low tone. At length the younger, with a look of animation, said,—

“Trig will help us; let us find him.”

“But do you know where to look for him?” asked Sister Mary.

“Perfectly; and if I did not, we should have but to ask. I will act as chief; you need only follow me, and we will succeed,” replied Sister Marguerite.



This plan was discussed, and, at length, proved to be the very one which Sister Mary would prefer. In a short time they had left that place, and were on their way in search of "Trig." For a part of the road they took advantage of the public conveyance, which carried them within a short day's journey, on foot, of their immediate destination. They resolved to continue their course so long as the day, which was now near its close, should last, and walked forward with good courage, occasionally stopping to assure themselves that they were in the right way, or to ask which of two ways they should take. Sister Mary had become unusually silent,—seemed, in fact, hardly to observe outward things, so much was she looking into herself, or so absent was she in spirit. Indeed, both were too weary to converse.

The sun was already going down with a great glory of clouds about him, making the western heavens look almost as if the gates of Paradise had been thrown open that he might enter there for the night. Robins and some other happy birds were singing their evening hymns in a not far-off copse, and the nightingales beginning their lament. Amphibious dwellers by the shore of a neighboring pond were piping a melancholy chorus; the herbage was resonant with the songs of crickets and other chirruping insects, and the outcries and swoop of the nighthawk began to be heard.

The wayfarers stopped to gaze at the celestial scene. And, as they looked silently, tears stole from Sister Mary's eyes, and coursed softly down her pale cheeks.

When the sun had entirely disappeared, falling on her knees by the roadside, and lifting up a little crucifix, she repeated, in a voice scarcely audible, an evening prayer to the Virgin. Her tones seemed rather the utterings of a spirit which, through its very earnestness,



had found voice, than the natural articulations of material organs. Sister Marguerite followed the example of her companion and kneeled ; but her prayer was made without sound.

They arose and went on, looking now for some suitable hostelry, or other place, where they might find rest and shelter for the night. No habitation could they see, nor did they perceive any till they had walked yet some distance. Night was fast closing around them, and even the little stars had taken their places, when the travelers reached a small but neat cottage, situated at the end of a short avenue of oaks, which led to it from the high-road. A solitary light was burning near one of the windows. The tired wayfarers went up to the door and knocked. A female servant, accompanied by a child some six or eight years old, answered the summons, and stared wondering at the strangers.

“We are two harmless women, my good friend,” said Sister Mary, “who are belated and seek shelter for the night.”

“Who is there?” asked a faint voice from within. But the little one had retreated to the room whence the voice came, exclaiming,—

“Oh, sister, here are two strange ladies !”

“Bid them come in,” said the voice, and the comers followed the servant into the house. A young woman was lying upon a sofa, which had been turned into a cot. The unknown guests were struck by the paleness of her thin face, and its contrast with her large and unnaturally brilliant black eyes, and her raven hair, which fell down and rested its luxuriant length upon the floor.

“I fear we intrude,” said Sister Mary, gently. “We are on a journey, and ventured to ask here a resting-place for the night.”



“You are welcome,” replied the invalid, for such she plainly was. “I am so glad you have come.” And she held out one of her pale, small hands. “I have thought of you so often.”

What she meant was that her thoughts had dwelt much upon the venerable sisterhood to which the travelers belonged, as indicated by their dress. She had, indeed, often fancied, of late, that it would be very sweet to flee away from the ills of the world into some of the refuges provided by the church.

“You are suffering,” said Sister Mary, drawing a chair and seating herself beside the cot. Sister Marguerite also sat near by. The servant and the child had left the room. “Have you been long ill?”

“Not as I am now,” replied the sick girl, who had been addressed by the servant as Miss Clementine.

“But you are not alone here? You have some one with you besides the servant and child whom we saw?” asked the kind sister.

“No,” answered Clementine, “we have a man-servant; but he has gone to do an errand. He will be back soon. Is it very late?”

“Not yet. Can we do nothing for you?”

“Thank you, no,—that is, if you will only stay with me. I am so lonely since—since they came. Before I was wounded I could go out, and then the days and nights were not so long. But now I cannot do that any more.”

“Wounded! How wounded, and where, my poor child?”

“Here, in my side,—no, do not touch it, please. I will tell you all about it. Shall I?”

“Certainly, if it does not tire you. But is your wound well dressed?”



“Yes. The doctor says I must not disturb it till he comes again. Will you give me some of that drink, please?”

Sister Mary did as requested, and the sufferer drank with feverish eagerness.

“You see,” said Clementine, “my father and brother went away to the war. My mother and I were satisfied, because we thought it right for them to do so. After awhile news came that my father was killed. Then we began to feel that war is a dreadful thing. Still, we were assured that justice was on our side, and this helped us to bear our trouble. We stayed at home, hoping for success and peace, and bearing up against disaster as well as we could. A few days ago, the enemy broke through the lines and made a raid in this neighborhood. A force of cavalry was sent to oppose them, but was driven back, and retreated, skirmishing, by our house. Carbines were freely used, and as they came near us, my mother, seeing my little brother, who had gone into the yard to look at the soldiers, and was exposed to the shots, ran out to bring him in, when a random ball struck her, and she fell. I rushed out to help the child, who was shrieking with terror and tugging at her skirts, to drag her into a place of safety, when I too was struck and fell beside my dead mother.”

“Dead!” cried both the strangers in a breath.

“Yes. She was dead. She never spoke to me again. The fight rushed on past us, and the sound of the firing gradually went beyond hearing. The servants brought me in, and the man went for a surgeon. Fortunately, he met one not far off. When I came to,—for I had fainted,—my wound was dressed. I asked the doctor if I was badly hurt. He tried to smile, and said that if I kept still and had good care all would be well. But—do you know?—I



believe he tried to deceive me. I have been growing weaker and weaker every day. See how thin my hands are. Do you think it is a very bad wound?"

"I hope not, my child. But you must not speak too much."

"I am so glad you have come. I want to talk with you. And I can rest better to-night. It will not be so lonely while you are here. Hark! was that a horse? I thought I heard a horse's feet. Is it very late?"

"It is time for you to sleep, I suppose. There, do not talk any more to-night. We will sit by you."

"But you have not had anything to eat. I did not think of it."

"Do not mention it, my good girl. We are very well as we are."

"But you must have some supper. If you will be so good as to ring that bell,—yes, you must to please me. And then I will go to sleep if you wish,—or we will converse, for I am not sleepy."

She was, indeed, not sleepy. A feverish excitement possessed her, which prevented sleep. Perceiving this, Sister Mary thought it best to humor the wounded girl, and rang for the servant. When she came, Clementine directed the woman to place some food before the travelers. They said that a piece of bread and a cup of milk was all they desired; and presently a frugal supper was served, of which they partook sparingly, and in silence.

While they were eating, the sufferer had closed her eyes, and seemed to have fallen into a light slumber. The guests refrained from speaking, and some time elapsed ere a word was again heard in the room.

At length the invalid started, opened her eyes wide, and exclaimed,—

"Did you hear it? Hark!"



After listening for a moment, the sound of a horse's feet was distinctly audible.

"'Tis he! he is coming! he is here! he has come! But you must not see him," cried Clementine, excitedly. "Go into that room, please," she added, pointing to a door.

Surprised, the strangers arose, and passed by that door into an inner chamber.

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## CHAPTER X.

### FAITH WRONGLY PLACED.

THE travelers had hardly closed the door which separated them from the sick girl when they heard heavy footsteps enter the room in which she lay. So thin was the wall of partition that every word uttered distinctly in one chamber could be heard in the other. At first Sister Mary and her companion heard unwillingly, and because they could not help it, what passed between their suffering hostess and her visitor; but after a time they listened eagerly, and with a purpose.

"So you threaten me, do you?" The voice was that of a man, excited, loud and harsh. "Did you write that letter?"

"Yes," answered Clementine, in a gentle, deprecating tone. "Do not be angry."

"Do you *mean* all that you say here?"

"I wanted so much to see you, and you paid no attention to all my other letters. It is a very long time since you have been here,—not since my mother was killed."

"Killed, was she?"



“I sent you word all about it, more than two weeks ago, and how badly I was wounded——”

“Served you right for being such a fool as to get in the way. You ought to have been killed yourself, and I wish to God you had been!”

The man's manner of speaking was like that of one partially intoxicated, or at least excited by strong drink.

“Why, what have I done?” asked Clementine.

“Done? everything. I cannot have a moment's peace. Because I have been so busy that I could not attend to all your invitations and complaints, you must write a letter threatening to confess all and ‘expose’ me if I do not come. Very well. Try to betray me, and you will convict yourself. Who carried on the negotiations? You. Who crossed the lines? You. Who did the writing? You. Who was the traitor? You. What did I do? Nothing. As if I were the man to put my own head in the hangman's rope! As for yourself, you may go hang when you will; and the sooner the better.”

“And why did I do all this?”

“Because you were a d—d fool, I suppose.”

“Yes, so great a fool as to think, to feel, that I could not do too much for you; that risking my soul was not enough, and so I threw my life into the venture. But *that* I did innocently, for you made me believe it was right.”

“Did I? Well, you can fancy so still if you wish, and hold your tongue about it. Then your life will be safe——”

“But my life is not safe, and it is that about which I wish to talk with you. Let us not quarrel any more. Listen to me patiently. Do you not see that I am going to die? This wound will kill me. You do not notice how I am changed. I have grown weaker every day,



and now no strength is left me. See my hand ; you can look through it, almost."

"Don't be a simpleton."

"I am not, and I wish to be wiser than I have been. I know that I shall not live long ; but I cannot die as I am."

"What do you want?"

"I want you to keep your solemn promise and marry me——"

"You be d—d !"

"How can you say such dreadful things to me? You know the past, how you pledged yourself, and swore, by all that men hold most sacred, to make me your wife. I wish you to do it now, and save me. Death will hide away my disgrace, it is true, but I dare not meet it thus. Make me your wife, and lift this terrible weight from my conscience. It will be but a little while, a few days at most, and you will be free again."

"How do I know that? You may not die."

"But I shall. I know it. I feel it. If I did not, I would not so urge you. It is hard, indeed, to see exposure, disgrace, and ruin coming surely and fast upon me ; yet I could bear that were I sure to live. But to die in such a condition,—oh, pity me, and save me from this! How is it that you are so altered? I felt so safe in loving you. It appeared impossible that one whose mind seemed filled with noble thoughts could ever act basely ; that one who publicly, and so eloquently, praised all virtue could ever fail to love it. When I heard you speak, and saw that all the world admired you, it was to me as if my soul were far too small to envelop and hold fast to itself all your greatness, all your goodness. And so I deemed that whatsoever you should ask of me must be right, however I might doubt, and that all in my power to grant was too little. No matter now. I am as I am, and you,—ah! you have changed. Such



thoughts as you then uttered, and the purpose of such deeds as you since have done, never dwelt together. But I do not wish to reproach you. I only ask you to do one thing,—to make me your wife, and take away my sin and reproach.”

“That is not much, is it?”

“And you will do it? Oh, say you will!”

“I shall say nothing of the kind. I do not choose to be bullied by a woman.”

“What! You will not?”

“That is about it.”

“You refuse to keep your word, and make me your wife?”

“I do. I have other fish to fry.”

“Then, Heaven helping me, I will make such shrift as I can; and you must take the consequences.”

“More threats, eh?”

“I have sent for my brother.”

“Oh, you have, have you? What will he do? Who got him his commission?”

“You did. You were very kind to us *then*,—could not do enough or promise enough *then*. But I have sent for him. And he will come. I wrote him that I was wounded to death, and that he must come. He will be here soon. Would to Heaven he were here now!”

“Very well, let him come. Only do not urge him to put himself in the way of danger. This talking makes me thirsty. Is this brandy?” And the speaker helped himself to a draught, saying, “Here’s to your better temper, my love.”

“Pestyfog Clappergong, you mock me!” cried Clementine, still more excited.

Yes, the man who had, thus far, carried on a part in this strange conversation, was the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong. Irritated by the events that had taken



place in the afternoon and early hours of the evening, mortified and enraged by the treatment he had received from Marion, he had already drunk more strong drink than was his custom, when Clementine's servant brought him a message that he did not think it well to disregard. Mounting his horse, he had ridden fast towards the cottage, but halted at every opportunity to brace his nerves and raise his spirits with more brandy-and-water. Usually, he was too cautious to give way to excess; but on this occasion he anticipated no need of particular prudence or policy. Guessing, vaguely, the especial reason for this summons, his mind was at once made up as to his course of conduct. But that course would have been pursued with more deceit and hypocrisy had he drunk less. He had plans, as is known, very different from, and that would have been marred by carrying out, that insisted on by Clementine. He felt much confidence in his powers of evasion, and, as to most matters, that confidence was not misplaced. He possessed influence, and he knew how to make the most of it.

“Have you forgotten what I said in that letter?” went on Clementine, with increasing vehemence. “That will I do unless you act as you should, and as you have promised, in this matter.”

“And I have told you to do it and be hanged. You cannot hurt me. Besides, I have hedged. I am going to catch a spy to-night,—a spy who does not know himself that he is one,”—here the Honorable gentleman laughed hoarsely,—“and that will be doing the State some service. At any rate, the fools who believe themselves the State will think so. I made him myself on purpose to catch. And if I do not get him, I shall have done the other side a good turn, which they will remember if worst comes to worst and we are whipped. I shall have sent them some



papers which they would gladly buy at a round price, and in a way, too, that cannot, in any event, be discovered and proved against me by our heroes. So, you see, my darling, I have the chances all in my favor, and you need not try to frighten me. It is useless, my love."

"Then nothing will move you?"

"You cannot do it, my dear. And, as I said, you had better hold your tongue. But whether you do or not makes no difference to me. There is no evidence against me but your word; and I would take care that nobody should believe that."

"You forget the paper which it was necessary that you should sign, and which I was to deliver to the other party. That party was satisfied to see the document, and, at my request, returned it to me——"

"And now——"

"I have it."

"You have it?"

"Yes, I have it."

"Give it to me."

"When I am your wife."

"Give it to me now."

"I will not."

"It will be better for you."

"I say I will not."

"Where is it?"

"Safe,—safe enough."

"Give it to me, I tell you. D—n you, give it to me!"

"Never!"

"Then I will murder you."

"You dare not."

"Dare not? dare not? d—n you!" And he seized the courageous girl by the throat.

"Help! help!" she cried, in a stifled voice. The door



opened instantly, and the two Sisters stood, like two ghosts, before the appalled gaze of the would-be murderer.

“Hold, rash man !” commanded Sister Mary.

“Villain !” exclaimed Sister Marguerite, as they both advanced quickly towards him.

He did not wait, but rushed from the house ; and the sound of his horse’s flying feet soon died away in the distance.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### FAITH RIGHTLY PLACED.

THE woman-servant, and the man who had carried the letter to the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, hastily came into the room which that gentleman had just left, alarmed by the cries of their mistress. They found her insensible, and the Sisters bending over her. She had fainted. After some time spent anxiously by them all in efforts to restore her to consciousness, she slowly opened her eyes and looked around. Her gaze expressed a strange mixture of terror, anxiety, and hopelessness. A great change had come over her. The appearance of feverish excitement and strength which the strangers had noticed during their first interview with her, had given place to one of extreme weakness and quiet, almost torpor. The fever had entirely disappeared ; her eyes also had lost their unnatural brilliancy, and now looked dull and languid.

“Has he gone ?” she asked, in a whisper.

“Yes. But we are all here with you, my child,” replied Sister Mary.



The sufferer closed her eyes and was a long time silent. At length she opened them again, and, looking at Sister Mary, she said,—

“I want to talk with you alone. I want you to help me. You will, won’t you?”

Sister Mary bent down, and, kissing her, said, softly,—

“With all my heart and strength. Leave us by ourselves,” she added, turning to the servants; and they went out.

“And you, sister,” she continued, addressing Sister Marguerite, “go and pray for us.”

Sister Marguerite withdrew to the room whither she and Sister Mary had retired on the arrival of the Honorable Pestyfog.

Upon Sister Marguerite’s withdrawal from the room, Clementine lifted her eyes, and, gazing earnestly at Sister Mary, said, in a low, solemn voice, which at the same time betrayed a feeling of vague terror,—

“I want you to speak with me of death and my soul. I want you to save my soul. Can you not?”

“I cannot,” answered Sister Mary, gently; “but there is One who can, and who will, if you ask Him sincerely, as you ask me, believing, too, that He can, and that He will.”

“But you do not know how bad I have been, how bad I am. I want to tell you all; and then, maybe, you will see that there is no way for me.”

“Ah, I know that there is a way for all, my dear; for you as well as for others. But say to me what you wish. It will do you good.”

And then Clementine told, painfully, all the sad story of her temptation and fall; of her brief happiness, and her enduring sorrow; of the brightness of her short-lived hopes, and the darkness of her long despair, lighted,



indeed, by some faint, lingering rays of illusions forever set, till now all was dreary darkness, voiceless and starless night. And the forward look was into deeper darkness and storm; the great storm of His wrath, and the endless night.

She sought not to place the blame for her wrong-doing on another. She felt that it was all her own, and only spoke of that other as the means, not the cause, of her sin, and thus only so far as was needful to make her story plain. For his sake she had helped him in political plots and intrigues which were dishonorable, and, by the law of the land, criminal. But the remembrance of these acts troubled her less.

When she had finished her recital, or confession, she looked wistfully and timidly into Sister Mary's face, as if she feared to hear her condemnation pronounced. The gentle Sister took her hand and, tenderly kissing her forehead, tried to comfort her by turning her thoughts to the only Source of comfort. The invalid listened intently as the sweet voice went on, relating His invitations, His promises, His gentleness, His love, His forgiving pity, His all-atoning sufferings and sacrifice; illustrating the truth of what she said by many examples: by the story of Mary Magdalene, of the woman taken in adultery, of the woman who dared only to touch the hem of His garment, and of many saints and martyrs; urging on her listener, in tender, pleading tones, the exercise of penitence and faith, faith which sees through the veil that reason cannot pierce, and knows that to be which reason would vauntingly prove not to be, because unperceived by its short vision.

In this way, with earnest, childlike prayers and tears, did Sister Mary strive, fervently, to show the sincerely



penitent soul how it should be fitted for the great change which was plainly near.

Thus the hours sped away. Midnight was long passed, and the first faint light forerunning the dawn had appeared in the east, when the steps of a horse going at full speed were heard. Clementine started and looked wildly around.

“Oh, do not let him come!” she cried, in terror of another visit from the Honorable Mr. Clappergong.

The horse stopped suddenly at the door, and, a moment afterwards, a young officer came hastily into the room.

“Ernest!” almost shrieked the invalid, while a look of joy lighted up her wan face.

“My poor sister!” murmured the officer, as he folded her tenderly in his arms.

Sister Mary, leaving them together, quietly withdrew to the chamber where Sister Marguerite was waiting, whom she found kneeling by the side of the bed, her head bowed upon the coverings and her face in her hands.

For some minutes the brother held the sister in a close embrace, and both were still. Clementine spoke first.

“I am so glad you have come,” she said. “You will take care of me; you will stay here with me now, will you not, Ernest?”

“Yes, darling,” he answered; “I will not leave you till you are well again.”

“Well again! Oh, Ernest, I shall never be well again in this world! You will not be obliged to remain long. I have only a short time to live. I know it, Ernest, and you must not try to deceive me. I shall be better when I am gone, I hope. Yes, I hope, dear Ernest,” she repeated, clasping her small, thin hands together, and looking devoutly upward, while an indescribable light softly illumined her pale countenance, as burning spirit glows



through alabaster,—“I hope by His mercy and His merits.”

And then she went on, speaking in a weak voice, but with animation, to tell him of how lost and hopeless she had been till the good Sister came, sent like an angel of pity, and led her to the little wicket-gate, through the Valley of Humiliation, to the cross, where her burden rolled away, up the Hill Difficulty, safely by the lions, to the Palace Beautiful; and had promised to be by her as she should go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death; to guide her to the Delectable Mountains and the Land of Beulah, pointing out the celestial gates, and only leaving her when she should go into the river, and be in sight of the messengers waiting to conduct her to the Holy City. She said nothing of, and did not even make an allusion to, the Honorable Mr. Clappergong.

The brother listened with tearful eyes, his hands clasped in hers. But he was not satisfied to have the doings of that Honorable gentleman passed by in silence. In her letter to him, written when she was in great trouble, she had said enough to make it possible for her brother to infer much of the truth; and he now insisted upon knowing the whole. She tried to evade his questions, but he was persistent and unbending in his purpose, and gradually drew from her admissions sufficient to make the facts clear in his own mind. The revelation thus obtained he heard with dry eyes, and his voice grew hard and hoarse as he questioned. When he learned that the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong had positively refused to redeem his word and wed Clementine, although he did not know with what gratuitous insult and brutality the refusal had been made, his dark, manly features seemed to be hardened like steel, and a strange and sinister light to be kindled in the depths of his large, black, piercing eyes as he



raised himself from bending over his sister and sat erect.

“Do not be angry with me, dear Ernest,” pleaded the sufferer.

“Angry with you, my poor child, my own darling!” answered he, taking her again in his arms, very gently and tenderly; “that would be impossible. There! there! do not think of it any more. You were right not to speak of him; he is unworthy of your thoughts now.” And he kissed her pale forehead, her eyes, and her cheeks, again and again.

“And you must not think of him, either,” said the now forgiving and patient girl. “You must not seek to punish, but leave him to be dealt with by the great Judge of us all, who cannot err. Promise me that you will do this.”

Ernest tried to avoid making the promise asked; but the prayers of his sister at length wrung from him such an assent as seemed to satisfy her.

Then, after a short silence, she said,—

“You will take all my trinkets, Ernest, and keep some of them for little brother when he gets older. Oh, what will the poor child do without me?”

And then she expressed some further wishes in regard to the disposition of various things which had been her own and especially cherished by her. Afterwards she closed her eyes and was as if in a light slumber. Ernest, kneeling by her side, watched her. In a short time, however, she raised her lids and said,—

“Call the Sisters, Ernest,—it is time.”

Her brother did as requested, and Sisters Mary and Marguerite came at once to the aid of the invalid. They perceived that it was indeed time. Sister Mary set about administering such last rites of her Church as she could;



and, when these solemn and touching ceremonials were over, the little brother and the servants were called, and shortly entered the room. The poor child wept bitterly, and would not be comforted.

Clementine said some last words to her brothers and the servants, and bade each person present an affectionate good-by. Then, with her left arm lying across the neck of the child, who was kneeling and sobbing by the couch, and her left hand held by Ernest, she gave her right hand to Sister Mary, saying,—

“You will not leave me.”

She lay with her eyes closed. After awhile she murmured, as if to Sister Mary,—

“Lead me safely.”

For some time she did not speak again. Then she said,—

“I must cover my little plants. There will be a frost to-night ; it grows cold.”

Nothing now, for the space of a quarter of an hour, was heard in the room but the sobs of the child and the ticking of the old-fashioned clock in the corner, which seemed to augment the force of its strokes as they marked the seconds, emphasizing them with a kind of intelligent, almost triumphant, energy and glee, as if it were saying, “I told ye so, I told ye so,” and were exulting in the fulfillment of its unheeded prophecies.

By-and-by Clementine murmured,—

“Ah, I feel so well now,—not cold,—the sun is rising,—how soft and warm and bright it is! I shall not be cold or lonely any more!”

Dawn had, indeed, appeared, but not yet broken into the room. The sun was still below the horizon. Was it the light of the Sun, with healing in His beams, that she saw, making her well forever?



A few minutes later, Sister Mary bent her face to that of the dying girl, and perceived that she was now living for evermore. She had ceased to breathe.

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## CHAPTER XII.

THOUGHTS—PLANS—AN INTERVIEW—INTERRUPTION.

As the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong rode from Clementine's cottage towards the mansion of General Devray, he heartily cursed all womankind. They were always giving him some d—d annoyance by their infernally whimsical and romantic notions. They really treated him very badly. He could not understand why they need be such importunate fools; why they could not be a little reasonable, like other folks,—that is, like men. He found them very capricious, captiously and ill-naturedly exacting, absurdly unjust and extravagant in their expectations and claims, ready to suspect him of all kinds of dishonorable and unworthy conduct. He was, indeed, much abused by them. It was certainly too bad to distrust a man so good and so honorable, and show that distrust by asking him to keep his word; his word, on which had been staked honor, happiness, and, as might truly be felt, salvation.

Miss Marion, to be sure, asked nothing; but she snubbed him, and was stupid enough to show a preference for that mean cheat and impostor "the colonel." Miss Mabie, to whom he had proved his love by accepting every advantage and pleasure which she could offer as proofs of her own, was so wantonly unreasonable as to suspect him of playing



her false, and seemed to put no more trust in him than she would had he not readily—but not very tenderly or warmly, it must be admitted—taken all that she had to give. And now the wretched Clementine, to spend an evening with whom he had often robbed himself of his usual rest and sleep, and ridden over heavy roads, even in inclement weather, must turn upon him, take an unfair advantage of him, and wish to spoil all his plans, check him in mid-career, and blight his prospects of an easy fortune and a comfortable future, by forcing him to marry her. As if a man should be holden to fulfill all the promises he might make to a girl in the heat of passion,—a thing clearly impossible; and as if such promises were not made under a kind of duress! Surely it was enough to drive a man, with correct notions of things, honest and just, beyond the limits of all patience.

As he thought again of Clementine, and what had so lately taken place between her and himself came vividly, almost appallingly, to his mind, he reined in his horse, which he had been urging savagely but unconsciously. His surprise, not to say terror, at the sudden appearance of the Sisters, and the cool night air, had dissipated his intoxication, and he could review his conduct, which he remembered only indistinctly, with reasonable calmness, as well as consider the danger with which Clementine threatened him.

His first impulse was to go back and try, by wheedling and promises, to get from her the only unanswerable proof of his treason to the government which he had helped to make and sworn to support. A little reflection, however, convinced him that this was not the time to carry through such a plan successfully. He must wait till those accursed strangers should have gone away, and the injured girl had time to forget his violence, enough to



wish again to see him. Then, with a few well-shaped and well-uttered excuses, a little show of tenderness, some seemingly sincere caresses, much talk of regret, if necessary, and even some tears as a last resort, she would be brought to hear his vows as eagerly and as credulously as ever. Thus should he gain his point, and get hold of that d—d paper, all in good time; for she was not going to die just yet; not half so soon as he wished she might, d—n her! In the mean while he had other and sufficient occupation for his thoughts. The morrow, which would soon dawn, was to be a busy day, and he had no common interest in what should then take place. He must be ready to guide the action and control the result. Clementine and her affairs could wait a day or two, and be all the better for it.

These matters arranged in his own mind, and his course determined on, he quickened his horse's pace, and, reaching General Devray's house before the family were stirring, groomed his heated steed himself, and went to bed, to enjoy, if he could, a few hours' sleep.

The family was not stirring, it is true, but one of its members slumbered not. Marion had dismissed her maid and thrown herself upon a lounge, and there, with her face buried in its cushions, had she lain for hours as silent and motionless as if inanimate; save when, from time to time, a sigh, long and deep, convulsed her exquisite form. Occasionally, indeed, she would raise her head, and, looking helplessly around, moan,—

“Oh, what have I done! What shall I do?”

Then she would resume her motionless posture, lying upon her face. Thus the hours of the night passed her unnoticed.

As the first beams of day flushed the eastern sky, she arose, and, seating herself at a window, watched the deep-



ening glow in the heavens. With the morning, hope seemed to dawn upon her, and grew brighter as the sun came above the horizon. The benumbing effect of the events which had taken place the preceding evening passed away with the night, and a reaction set in, causing her vigorous intelligence to grasp with unusual power and sharpness of perception the facts and probabilities which most interested her. She was, however, too ignorant of the actual situation of Allerton to decide upon any definite plan of action. That he was a spy, as alleged by Colonel Clappergong, she did not for a moment believe. That he was an enemy to the cause which she had so much at heart, she knew from his own lips. Had he fallen before his hunters? Had he been taken by them? Was he wounded? Was he still living? Had he escaped to his friends? Had she, in any case, driven him from her forever? She could find no answer to these racking questions, which continually recurred to her anxious spirit. It pleased her most to fancy that he had been captured, and would be brought back a prisoner. Then she could, at least, communicate with, perhaps without impropriety see, him; might make such amends for her conduct, by defending him, and proving his innocence, and comforting him, that he could not refuse to forgive her. She thought of a thousand expressions of regret and self-accusation which she would use, a thousand forms of prayer for pardon, a thousand ways of approaching him which should surely make him overlook her hasty words and acts. And so intently did she think of all this, so vividly did she imagine how he would look and act, and what she would do and say, that her lips moved, and the words formed in her mind almost became audible. Perhaps, had she known that he was safe, and that she might see him at will, she would have been less disposed to ac-



cuse herself and more disposed to accuse him ; would have calculated more how much humility she ought to show, or whether, under the circumstances, she should humble herself at all before him. Her nature was, however, so magnanimous, so truly frank and loyal, and her heart so just and sincere in its impulses, that it is probable, had he then appeared before her, she would, in a delirium of mingled joy and penitence, have thrown herself into his arms, and wondered at his gentleness and goodness in forgiving her at all.

Cheered by the hope that what her wish had suggested and her imagination pictured might occur, she rang for her maid at an unusually early hour, and, after she had finished dressing, partook of a simple breakfast in her chamber. She was indisposed to meet the other members of the household in the breakfast-room, particularly the Honorable Mr. Clappergong. Shortly after she had made her repast, however, a written message was brought to her from that Honorable gentleman, requesting an interview. Acting from the impulse of the moment, she wrote and sent an answer to him, as follows :

“ You will please spare me the pain of seeing, and even of refusing to see, you again. After what has transpired there cannot be so much as friendship between us. Call yourself to my recollection in no way ; but let me concede to you the greatest indulgence in my power, which is, utterly to forget yourself and your persecutions.

“ MARION DEVRAY.”

She did not superscribe her note, nor put the Honorable Mr. Clappergong's name on it anywhere. She felt so great an aversion to his name even that she would not write it if not absolutely necessary. And in this case there was no



need of it, since the servant was to take the reply directly to him who sent the request. The messenger presently returned with a more urgent petition from the Honorable gentleman to be permitted to see Miss Marion. Meanwhile she had half repented her refusal, for it occurred to her that perhaps he might bring some news or let fall some expression from which she could gain an intimation of what had taken place in relation to the fugitive,—ask him directly she would not,—and this time she consented to receive him in the drawing-room.

When he appeared, Marion acknowledged his greeting very coldly. He trusted she had rested comfortably and felt quite recovered from the effects of last evening's accident. She thanked him, she had passed the night very well. He feared that, in his anxiety to assure himself of her welfare, he had made an untimely demand on her indulgence. She assured him that she should not have consented to receive a visit from him had it put her to any inconvenience. He hoped she was not offended by anything he had said or done yesterday. She let him know that some persons could not offend any more than they could insult her.

She was plainly keeping him at a long distance from, and below, her. He was not, however, to be daunted by a forbidding manner. Besides, he felt that it was necessary for him to act quickly. His schemes must be brought to fruit at once or be blighted. There was some danger, although, he thought, not very great or immediate, that what she had threatened Clementine might accomplish. Aside from that danger, he felt a certain uneasiness as to what consequences might grow out of his conduct when last with her, known as to some extent it must be by those d—d Sisters. He had for some time been losing confidence in his party, and doubted of its ultimate suc-



cess in the war. He had begun to face the possibility that a heavy retribution might, in case of failure, be visited upon him with other leaders and instigators. To avoid all annoyances which might come from any of these sources of disquiet, his favorite plan was to make Marion his wife, and obtain some appointment abroad in the diplomatic service of his government, as a decent pretext for quitting the country and abandoning the cause in which he had engaged, and in which he had so often, most publicly and solemnly, avowed his determination to conquer or die. The alliance with Marion was a necessary part of this plan only so far as it would give him control of her large fortune, which, as has been stated, was safely invested in a foreign land. He had expected to bring all this about without hurry; but the occurrences of the last twenty-four hours, and the apprehension of their possible results, made him feel in great haste to carry his plan into effect and be off. He had already intrigued for, and received a promise of, the diplomatic appointment, and was expecting his commission shortly. Now he came with such logic and rhetoric as he thought might suffice to induce Marion to enter into his views, and intrust herself and her wealth to his keeping. But he was not in a condition to do full justice to his ability as an advocate. The distractions through which he had so lately passed, the dangers by which he was surrounded, and which seemed to be closing in upon him, the necessity for instant action and achievement, and the importance to him of the interests at stake, rendered him nervous and weak, taking from him much of his usual sturdy self-possession and self-reliance, and, with them, much of his hardy skill.

“If my visit be ill timed,” he went on to say, “my excuse is that I have not the courage longer to defer saying what I now beg you to hear.”



“I must ask you to defer it, if it be anything very serious,” said Marion.

“Very serious it is to me; to you it may be a light thing,—serve for your mirth, perhaps. I must run this chance, for the torture of uncertainty is the worst. You cannot fail to divine the subject that lies nearest my heart, about which hover hopes and doubts, making a civil war in the confines of my soul and tearing me with their conflicts. You cannot but have seen how my imagination has been led in chains by your beauty, my mind captured by your wit and intelligence, and my heart enthralled by your goodness. I come now, driven to recklessness by alternations of hope and despair, love and jealousy,—jealousy of all and everything upon which you may smile, on which your hand may rest, which your foot may tread upon even, to stake all my future, all my hopes, all that life can have of happiness for me, on one throw; to tell you my love, so far as the poverty of language will permit me, and ask that you give me your own in return; to offer you my hand, and ask for your——”

“But, sir, this is a matter——”

“Do not answer yet. I offer you not an empty hand nor an unknown name. Of this you are aware. But you are not aware that I have assured a brilliant future for you if you become my wife. I am expecting, daily, my commission as minister to a foreign court. There, and there only, would you be elevated to your proper sphere. Were there any doubt about my receiving this commission, it would be dispelled by what I have just succeeded in doing for our cause.”

“You give yourself unnecessary——”

“Pardon me. Hear me to the end, I beg. I know the deep and earnest patriotism which fills your soul. This first awoke my admiration; it was a bond of sympa-



thy between us. I know the detestation which you feel for deceit, hypocrisy, and treachery, equaled only by that which I myself entertain. You will hear, then, with pleasure, what I have to tell. This morning, Trangolar, who did not come back till late last evening, discovered that his most important drawings had been stolen from his room. He was in a state of great excitement about it, particularly when he learned that the detached officers who had been so long guests at this house had gone away, with the purpose of escaping to the enemy, thus declaring themselves to be traitors and spies——”

“Colonel Clappergong——”

“I but express what he said of them and their conduct. He sought for the lost papers in vain. A few minutes ago, however, I received a dispatch, which informed me that both these officers had been taken and brought into camp; and that a set of drawings, corresponding in every respect with those lost by Trangolar, had been found on the person of one of them, actually in the colonel’s boot—— But you are ill. Such treachery is, indeed, astounding and sickening. Let me offer you a glass of water.”

“No, sir; I am perfectly well. Go on, if you please.”

“My services in detecting, and preventing the escape of, these spies—for they would have escaped but for me—will certainly be rewarded by the government. At least my appointment will thus be made sure, if, as I have no reason to think, it were before uncertain. With this confident expectation I ask you to become my wife, and share the honors which I may call already mine.”

“And so you say the colonel and his friend are spies?”

“Proven.”

“And that you prevented their escape and procured their capture?”



“Yes, I alone.”

“You will, I suppose, see that they are convicted?”

“That I will.”

“And executed?”

“With all my heart.”

“In this way you will earn the honors which you ask me to share?”

“Partially.”

“You knew that they were my friends, did you not?”

“I knew that you could have no friends among the enemies of your country.”

“But I tell you that those gentlemen are my friends. I tell you that the accusation against them must be false; that it is false; some enemy—some conspiracy—that is it, a plot to destroy them. And I firmly believe that you are at the bottom of it. But it shall not succeed. No harm shall come to them, if I can prevent it; and I am not powerless, though I am a woman.”

“Really, I am very sorry. I quite thought to please you; I counted on your well-known love for our cause, your hatred of guile, and believed that your approbation would be my best reward. I was not aware that you esteemed these men so highly. Such proofs against them ought, certainly, to change your opinion. But, if not, perhaps I might use some influence to help them out of the scrape,—just to please you. Yes, and I will promise to do so, if you will but promise to marry me. I will help you to set them free.”

“And I will set them free without your help.”

“Perhaps in that case I might show you to be their accomplice, which would be unpleasant, you know. Better let us work together.”

“Accomplice! Yes, sir, that I should be if I worked with you, for you profess to know them to be guilty. I, on



the other hand, feel sure of their innocence. I should be wise, indeed, to trust so safe an accomplice as yourself, a gentleman so trustworthy, a friend so loyal, a lover so faithful. I am perfectly well acquainted with the fact, sir, that you have been paying your addresses, or, at any rate, making love, to Miss Holdon, even up to this very day. The happy, deluded creature could not keep your secret. I think our interview may end here. There, sir, is the door."

"Miss Holdon! May she be—that is—— What! She? I make love to her? The empty-headed, weak-hearted fool! Why, she has been making love to me, and I could not be too hard on her, you know. I had to treat her kindly for your sake, if for no other reason. I make love to her!—the owl!"

"The owl, eh?" cried Miss Mabie, bursting into the room,—“the owl, eh? vain fool, eh? make love to you, eh? treat her kindly, eh? Oh, you viper! you snake! you crocodile!—you—you——” And here Miss Mabie went into hysterics, and the Honorable Mr. Clappergong went out of the room.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### CONFIDENCES—A CLUE—A DEPARTURE.

It is unnecessary to say that Miss Mabie, incited by curiosity, suspicion, and jealousy, had been listening at the door, which was left ajar, during the Honorable Mr. Clappergong's interview with Marion. For awhile she gave herself up to fits of rage, mortification, and heartfelt sorrow that her idol had been destroyed, shattered before



her very eyes, and by himself. For shattered, destroyed, and defiled he appeared to her just then. After expending a portion of her indignation in expletives and designations not very flattering to the Honorable gentleman at whom they were aimed, and who had so deeply wounded and offended her, she became more just, after the manner of some persons in similar circumstances, and furiously charged all the blame of the Honorable gentleman's lapse from unswerving fidelity on the tricks, coquetries, and hypocritic arts of Marion. Oh, she need not deny it. It was all her doings, impudent hussy, trying to get away other people's lovers, and making believe all the time that she didn't want them. Oh, she had seen it, she had seen it! It was no use saying it wasn't so to her; she had eyes of her own; she was not quite a fool, though some people might think she was. She knew how fond some people were of beaux, and how they could not get enough of their own. She knew how envious some people were if anybody else had a lover. It was no use to talk to her, etc.

But at length the violence of the storm was broken, and Miss Mabie sat down and enjoyed a long and refreshing cry. Marion vainly essayed to stay the flood of her tears. When they were exhausted, and Marion had smoothed Miss Mabie's ruffled plumage by some soothing and frank expressions of her own feelings, the two women had a long and confidential talk. Both felt the need of a confidante. Each was in trouble; each heart was overwhelmed with anxiety, but of a different kind. Miss Mabie was solicitous to make good her claim to the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, and could not afford to quarrel with him yet; not till he should be bound firmly to her. So she was anxious on that account, and had already forgiven and forgotten his disloyalty,—that is, only remem-



bered it for occasional use, at particular times, when he should be, or she should feel that he was, helplessly enchained.

Marion, while making known her painful solicitude on Allerton's account, confessed her love. She informed Miss Mabie of the dangers which threatened him and Bulldon; of their recapture through the interference of Colonel Clappergong; of the accusation, and of the evidence against them, as stated by that Honorable gentleman. Notwithstanding the offense so recently and so innocently given her by the young lady, Miss Mabie felt a sudden and unusual affection for Marion, and could not refrain from kissing her when convinced that she did not love, and would not, if she could help it, be loved by, the Honorable Mr. Clappergong.

As Marion recounted how the drawings had been found concealed in the colonel's boot, Miss Mabie's heart misgave her.

"Drawings?" said she, with bated breath. "What drawings?"

"Corresponding to those made by Captain Trangolar, he said," replied Marion.

"Is it possible! Who would have thought it!" cried Miss Mabie, astonished and shocked beyond measure. For at first it flashed through her mind that the Honorable Mr. Clappergong was in league with the spies, and had acted a treasonable part, in giving those drawings to the colonel and his friend; and that she had helped him in that dangerous action; since she did not for a moment doubt that the papers in question were those taken from Trangolar's room. This suspicion took away her strength, so that she really labored for breath and was ready to faint. Marion noticed her emotion, but did not guess its true cause.



“It is so strange!” murmured Miss Mabie; “and they were such nice young men.”

After a little while, however, her mind seized upon the fact that the spies had been arrested through the patriotic efforts of her adored Pestyfog, and her terror began to subside, as it was clear that had the Honorable gentleman been their accomplice, he would not have sought to prevent the escape of the runaway officers. She could not suspect that the Honorable Mr. Clapperpong had a little independent plot of his own; and she was coming, gradually, to believe him wholly guiltless,—that he had intended no more than a practical joke on Captain Trangular, as he had said when he begged her assistance. She wished to think it a matter of course that all connection between the taking of those papers from Trangular’s room and their discovery on the colonel’s person, in a way to compromise him seriously, if any such connection there were, was purely accidental, never designed by the man whom she loved.

“There has been a plot against the colonel; I am sure of it,” said Marion, with energy.

“How can that be?” asked Miss Mabie, but rather faintly; for somehow she felt that Marion might be speaking truly.

At this moment Cass entered the room, evidently much excited.

“Oh, missy,” he cried, “dey hab taken bofe ob um! Dey am gwine ter hang um! An’ de cap’n’s killed! An’ dey hab foun’ de papers! An’ dey am bofe spies——”

“They are no such thing; and I am ashamed of you, Cass,” broke in Marion.

“I say so too, missy,” went on Cass; “but dey say it be sure; an’ dey am gwine to hab a court-martial right away off at de fort——”



"Who told you all this?" asked Marion, interrupting him.

"A soldier, missy, dat came ter Massa Clappergong; an' dey hab gone away togedder," answered the servant. "But dar warn't nuffin in de colonel's boots 'fore he went away, 'cause I seen um."

"Did you clean the colonel's boots yesterday?" asked Marion, as tranquilly as she could.

"Yes, missy, I clean um twice yes'day."

"Why did you clean them twice?"

"'Cause wy Massa Clappergong he tole me ter shine um once more."

"Why did he do that?"

"Dun'no, missy. S'pose he seen dey was dirty."

"Where were the boots?"

"Dey war in Massa Colonel's room, missy."

"And you took them out, polished them, and then put them back again?"

"No, missy, not zactly so. I tuk um out ob de room. But jes' by Massa Clappergong's door he seen me, an' tole me ter put de boots right down dar an' run ober wid er note ter——"

"Did you leave the boots there?"

"Yes, missy, I lef' um jes' dar, right 'fore Massa Clappergong's door, an' went right off wid de letter——"

"Did he tell you to put the boots there?"

"Yes, missy. He tole me he was in a great hurry, an' I mus' jes' drop de boots right dar an' go right away."

"Were the boots there when you came back?"

"Yes, missy, jes' whar I lef' um."

"Had anything been done to them, or to either of them?"

"No, missy. I didn't see nuffin."

"Did you polish the boots then?"



“Yes, missy, I shine um up.”

“And found nothing in them?”

“No, missy, nuffin at all.”

“Bring up my horse, Cass, and saddle one for Miss Mabie and one for yourself. You must go with me to my father, dear Miss Mabie. Where can Captain Trangolar be? Did he say which way he was going, or when he should be back?”

These directions and questions were uttered by Marion in a voice that sounded strangely hard and stern, from the effort she made to control her feelings and the vigor of her determination. She was very pale, and her dark eyes shone with the steady glow of resolution. During the examination of Cass, Miss Mabie had sat nervously looking first at one and then at the other of the speakers, pulling now at one, now at another part of her dress, occasionally wringing her hands with a little more violence than usual, and pronouncing a series of meaningless exclamations and ejaculations.

Cass knew nothing of Captain Trangolar, except that, early in the morning, he had received a note, which was brought by a man-servant, and had called for his horse and ridden away at once.

“Very well, Cass,” said Marion. “Go and do as I have told you.”

While Cass was saddling the horses, his mistress and Miss Mabie—the latter of whom would have been far less willing to go had she not heard that the Honorable Pestyfog had departed with the soldier who brought him news of the capture—prepared to ride, and soon they were on their way, accompanied by the faithful servant.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## BROTHER AND SISTER—FRIENDS MEET.

WHEN the morning dawned, Sisters Mary and Marguerite felt that they could not immediately pursue their way, as they had before intended. They could not find it in their hearts to leave the grief-stricken Ernest and his weeping, doubly-orphaned little brother alone with their dead. Yet they were very anxious to accomplish the purpose of their journey; and, after some thought, it was decided that Sister Marguerite should send word to her brother, telling him of their presence in the neighborhood, and asking him to come to them at once. So Sister Marguerite wrote a note, which the man who had carried poor Clementine's last message to the Honorable Mr. Clappergong undertook to have conveyed to its destination by one of the servants of a friendly neighbor, to whose house he was going in order to communicate the sad news of his mistress's death and beg those kindly offices generally rendered by neighbors and friends on such occasions. This was the note which had been brought to Captain Trangular, and he was the brother sought. Only delaying to instruct his confidential servant to send after him any orders which might arrive, he set out to join his sister.

A pleasant ride in the cool of the morning brought him to the house of grief. His surprise, on learning that his sister was so near him, only equaled the pleasure of seeing and embracing her again. She met him outside the cottage. After the first greetings were over, and the first affectionate questions asked and answered, she led him to



a rustic bench placed under a tree in the little garden. Seating herself by his side and taking both his hands in her own, she said,—

“Now, Trig” (Captain Trangolar’s first name was Trigonon), “I am going to answer no questions that I do not want to ; but you are going to answer all my questions, and do just as I tell you.”

“That is hardly fair,” said Trig, smiling.

“Reasons of state and strategy, you know,” broke in Marguerite.

“Then you won’t tell me why you came here?” asked Trig.

“Oh, yes ; to see you, and for something else. And the something else is the most important,—though I am right glad to see you, too ; but I shall not tell you what it is,” replied Marguerite.

“Nor how you came here?”

“Oh, yes ; I will tell you that too. Part of the way on foot, and part of the way——”

“Of course ! of course ! But you did not come alone?”

“No ; a good friend of mine, another Sister of Charity——”

“You a Sister of Charity?”

“To be sure. Do you not see my dress?”

“You always were a charitable sister to me, darling. So another Sister of Charity came with you ? What did she come for ?”

“To take care of me, and for something else.”

“And the something else is more important, eh ?”

“Oh, much more important. But she is a real Sister, and so good and kind.”

“I am glad to see you cheerful and happy, darling, after all the fatigues and annoyances you must have had in playing the heroine and coming here.”

“Ah ! I am not so gay and happy as I seem. It is



gladness at seeing you again, and finding you so well, that brightens me up. Being a heroine is hard work for me. I have only tried to be one for some days, and it has made me dull,—even sad, at times, Trig. And I am getting very tired of it, and want you to help me. You must do all the fighting, all the heroic things, while I stay behind and be general. So you will run all the risks, perform all the rough labor, and I shall have all the credit. It is so comfortable and charming to feel that you are to take all this trouble off my shoulders and care for me now.”

“But you do not tell what you wish me to do.”

“I will, though, but not why I wish you to do it; that is, perhaps I shall not; we will see. Yet that makes no difference. You are to obey me in any case, you know. Obedience, blind obedience, and discipline.”

“Very well. Let me hear the orders.”

“You must tell me how to find some prisoners——”

“What! A rescue?”

“Well, suppose it is?”

“I cannot help you in anything of that kind, sis. Seriously, you must not order me to do anything disloyal or unsoldierly. I know you would not, consciously; but women have such queer notions sometimes.”

“Oh, la, la! How absurd you are! I do not want you to do what is disloyal. I only wish you to help find some prisoners,—for an honorable purpose, even according to your notions.”

“Who are they?”

“Colonel Allerton and Captain Bulldon——”

“Taken some weeks ago in a skirmish at ——?”

“Yes, so it was stated.”

“Then you ought to know more of them than I, for they effected their escape from the guard while detained on their way to the prison-camp, and got back safely



across the lines. So it was reported by the officer who had them in charge."

"What! Escaped?"

"Yes. They tied the officer, made one of the soldiers who were guarding them drunk, overpowered and bound the other, and took themselves off, notwithstanding that one of them was supposed, at the time, to be entirely disabled by his wounds."

"But we heard nothing of that, or of them. And such a feat would have been talked of publicly had it been successfully accomplished."

"Part of it was successfully accomplished, no doubt of that. But of course I do not know whether they were lucky enough to get back to their friends—— Stop a minute, though,—stop a minute! That is it!—How stupid I have been! That explains it all!"

"What explains it all? All what?"

"Were you acquainted with them?"

"I have seen them."

"And can describe them?"

"Oh, yes."

"Do so, carefully."

"Minutely?"

"As well as you can."

"Colonel Allerton is, I should think, about five feet ten inches in height, and well proportioned. His hair and eyes are very dark, and would pass for black. He wears, or did wear, a full, but not heavy, beard. His nose is a little aquiline, his complexion brown. Will that do?"

"Perfectly. I think I know him. But let us have the description of his friend."

"How do you know he is his friend?"

"Well, his companion, then, or comrade, or fellow-prisoner, or what you will."



“Captain Bulldon is a little taller than Colonel Allerton, broad-shouldered, muscular, blue eyes, fresh complexion, very long whiskers, which, like his moustache and hair, are light auburn, features very regular, of the Grecian type, carriage erect and spirited. Both are very handsome men, according to their respective styles, and would be remarked anywhere. Is that definite enough?”

“Quite. I know them both; at least, I think I do. Two tricksters.”

“Oh, you do not know them at all!”

“I am very sure I do. They have been staying at the same house with me, passing themselves off, under assumed names, as officers of our army——”

“Under what names?”

“The dark one called himself Colonel Hamilton.”

“And the other?”

“Captain Overdon.”

“Well?”

“And they did it very cleverly, I must say; although I have been so busy that I have seen very little of them. They remained there till yesterday, accepting and enjoying the kindest hospitality, when they suddenly left, taking away, as I have every reason to believe, some plans and designs which I had made, and which they could not have got at without entering my room surreptitiously,—burglariously, I might say.”

“They cannot be the men I mean. Where did they go?”

“To the devil, I trust. Their purpose was, clearly, to escape and rejoin their forces, which they may have done; but I hope not.”

At this moment the attention of brother and sister was attracted by the sound of horses' feet, and, looking up, Captain Trangolar saw Miss Marion, Miss Mabie, and Cass in the highway, coming towards the cottage. Much



surprised, he went to the roadside, to greet the ladies and learn if any mishap was the cause of their ride. Marion appeared no less pleased than astonished to see this good friend there, and eagerly pulled up her horse.

“Oh, captain,” said she, “I wanted so much to see you! I sent for you this morning, but you were already gone.”

“Has anything happened?” asked he. “Can I do anything for you now?”

“Yes, something terrible has happened, and I do not know what to do. After you left, Colonel Clappergong received word that Colonel Hamilton and Captain Overdon had been taken, and certain papers found which proved them to be spies. So he said. They are to be tried by court-martial this very day, and he says they must be convicted and executed. What can I do?”

“What do you wish to do, my dear lady?”

“Wish to do? Why, to prevent this villainy. They are no more spies than you are, Captain Trangolar. It is all a nefarious scheme of that man Clappergong. At least, I think so; but I cannot yet prove it, and the time is short. What am I to do?”

“This kindly solicitude for your enemies is only what your friends would expect from your good heart, Miss Marion, whose generous impulses have, if you will allow me to say so, blinded your judgment. I have some reason to think that those gentlemen did not enter our lines as spies, but that, once within, they found the opportunity to follow that calling, and did not let it slip.”

“But I know you are all wrong, only I do not know how to prove it.”

“What do you propose to do? Where were you going, if I may ask without seeming too bold?”

“I am going to my father.”

“But he cannot help you, my good friend.”



“Will he have nothing to say about it?”

“Oh, yes. He will have to approve the finding and the sentence of the court, probably. But with its action and deliberations he will have nothing to do.”

“Then he must not approve the sentence.”

“My poor child,—excuse me,—you do not know your own father, and will but give him additional pain in the discharge of his duty, from which no considerations for himself or his family can turn him.”

“But if it can be shown that they are not guilty?”

“Nobody will be more gratified than he, unless it be myself, on your account. Did you hear where the court was to be convened?”

“Yes. At the fort.”

“But your father is not there.”

“Had he been there I should not be here.”

A messenger galloped up and delivered a sealed envelope to Captain Trangolar, who hastily opened and read it.

“I am wrong,” he said. “This is an order from the general, your father, for me to meet him at the fort, where he will be to-day. If you like, we will go there together. But first let me speak to this lady, who is my sister.” And he retired to the bench on which Marguerite had remained seated.

In a few words Captain Trangolar informed his sister that Colonel Hamilton and Captain Overdon, whom he suspected to be the persons that she wished to find, had been retaken and brought to the fort. He did not mention, nor, indeed, had Marion told him, that the captain was wounded; nor did he say that they were to be tried for their lives.

Marguerite went at once to tell Sister Mary what she had learned, and, bringing her from the cottage, presented her



brother. Trangolar suggested that, if the ladies wished to make sure whether the captured officers were the men they sought, it would be well for them to accompany him to the fort; a suggestion with which they agreed, after a little discussion,—the more readily as neighbors were beginning to arrive at the cottage, and their services there were no longer needed. But how were they to travel? This was, at first, a perplexing question. Cass, however, having been called into the council, said that if they could find a vehicle and a harness for his horse, he could, with his mistress's consent, drive the ladies wherever they wished to go. He was sent to search the premises, and soon returned to announce that he had found a wagon and harness; and permission was cheerfully granted by Ernest for the party to make such use of them as might best suit their convenience. So the servant harnessed his horse to the carriage; Sisters Mary and Marguerite, having first taken a kind leave of the mourners, seated themselves in it; Cass took a place in front of them, to drive; Captain Trangolar, mounting his horse, placed himself by Marion's side, and, with her, leading the way, they all set out for their new destination, each too much occupied with thoughts, anxieties, and reflections to be disposed for conversation.

They were willing to leave Miss Mabie behind, since Marion did not now need her company; and she was contented to remain, drawn to the place, as she was, by that indefinable attraction which many persons of her age and sex feel when near the spot where a death, especially if it be sudden or tragical, has recently taken place.



## CHAPTER XV.

## FOREBODINGS.

AFTER their capture the prisoners, as has been intimated, were taken to the fort,—Allerton strictly guarded, and Bulldon, who remained insensible, as tenderly as the means of conveyance would permit. On reaching the post, a surgeon was at once called, who examined the captain's injuries, and found that his skull had been grazed by a bullet, but not fractured, and stated that the wound was not necessarily mortal, nor even very serious, unless the brain had been contused by the blow. Restoratives were used, and consciousness gradually returned. Medicines and careful treatment were prescribed for the patient, whom Allerton watched over with the utmost solicitude and to all whose wants he insisted on administering. They were placed in a comfortable room at the fort, and left together, guards having been stationed for their safe-keeping.

"I say, Ally," muttered Bulldon, from his cot, "why did you let that blasted doctor bring me to? I might have slipped off quietly, and now, perhaps, I shall make a row about it. Those fellows have no heart in such a case."

"Possibly it might have been better so, my boy,—who knows? But, then, he did not ask my consent. You see, it is no affair of ours, as we were not consulted. So all you have to do is to keep still," answered Allerton.

"Still! Of course. I haven't moved since I can remember. But I suppose I may talk?"

"Not with the 'blasted doctor's' permission, nor with mine either."



“Now, look here, Allerton. You are a deuced good fellow, the best friend I ever had,—that is, you come nearest my heart,—and you are made of such stuff as the gods put into men when they want to do their best work. Therefore I rely on you not to utter any nonsense now, for I am about rather a serious business. I am not going to be coddled and nursed in order to be put into a cage like a wild beast or set up for a mark to be fired at. I have had my last shot, and there is no use in making a fuss about it. So let us talk while we may, and act like two Christians, who are not afraid.”

“I am half inclined to agree with you. If being put in a cage were the worst——”

“Ay, that is it. To continue a purposeless life, without hope of erasing the stigma placed on me at my birth, or of again having faith in those who, when trusted, are able to incite to the noblest efforts, and for one of whom I would have striven to take all prizes——”

“The shock which that wound gave to your nervous system has depressed your spirits. The future would look more bright to you——”

“Not at all. That shot only cleared away the mists which made rainbows possible, and I see the future in its true aspect,—myself as I am. We often deceive ourselves by affecting to believe what we do not. I am tired of it,—tired of shams.”

“Well, try to be quiet now, my dear fellow. The doctor said you must remain undisturbed and unexcited. Try to sleep a little.”

“Excuse me, Allerton, but I have no inclination to sleep, and as little to be silent. I shall have a long slumber presently. If I choose to talk myself to death, how can it concern that hypocrite of a doctor, who has killed more people with one of his drugs in a year than I have



in my life, with all the means at my disposal? But I do not intend to commit suicide, by talking, or in any other way. The work of ending an aimless career has been done for me, and satisfactorily; only it is intolerable to have been chased into a corner and shot like a deer."

"Better than to be snared and choked like a rabbit."

"How choked?"

"Why,—with bad air in some prison." Then to himself Allerton added, "He knows nothing of it yet, and I will not tell him. He will learn it soon enough, if he live; and, if he do not, let him die in ignorance of this. It will be better so."

"Do not misunderstand me," said Bulldon. "I am not complaining, nor do I intend to go out of the world scolding. I am only telling you why I feel satisfied with my fate, or, at any rate, try so to feel, except as to the ignominious manner in which its final decree was made known. But I believe, Allerton, that He who directs all things makes no mistakes, and so I am sure that everything inevitable is right. And, if anybody should ever be friendly enough to ask you about me, you can tell them what I have said."

Bulldon was thinking of his mother with inexpressible longing, and questioning himself whether she would ever seek to know anything of his career and end.

"You will tell them yourself, if you wish,—that is, your wound is not so serious as you think. The surgeon (and he appears skillful) said that, unless your brain had received an injury greater than was probable from the appearance of the hurt, you would very soon be on your feet again."

"I will not dispute the matter with him. We may both enjoy our own opinions. And, in spite of his, mine remains unchanged. But there is one thing which



has escaped me, and of which you do not seem to think. We were taken within the enemy's lines, disguised in their uniform. Do you think these fellows will miss the chance to make out that we are spies, or that the patriotic Clapergong will lose such an opportunity to signalize his zeal and glut his mean vengeance? No. I am better off as I am; better off than you are, Ally. The time has come, and I shall ask you to do me a favor, my good friend."

"Anything in the world that I can do for you shall be done most gladly."

"You remember—it was only yesterday—that I told you something of my personal history, and showed you a letter from my poor mother, as yet unread?"

"Certainly."

"It is time to read that letter. I do not feel quite equal to the effort, and must ask you to do it for me."

"Most willingly, if you insist. But in any event, whatever its contents, it can but be exciting, perhaps painful, to you. Would it not be more judicious to put off the reading, and for you to try and sleep first, in order to restore your strength somewhat?"

"No. It must be read now, or I may never know my mother's last words to me. You cannot tell how I long for her now; and it would be such a consolation to hear what she says to me in that letter. I should almost feel that she was by my side. So do not make any more objections and cause me to weary myself with arguments, but take the letter at once from my neck, here, and read it."

Thinking it inexpedient to urge his views further, Allerton took the letter from his friend's bosom, opened it, cast his eyes over the first page to familiarize himself a little with the writing, and then read as follows:



## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE LETTER—ALL FOR LOVE.

“MY DEAR SON, MY ONLY CHILD,—I know your love, and how sacred your mother’s wishes have always been to you. I know that when you shall read these words you will be on the verge of that world where the best need all the excuses that infinite charity can urge. Your heart, penetrated, as never before, with a sense of human weakness and error, will seek, more than ever, to find only justification for the acts of her who bore you. And if your judgment must condemn her, think that now, for the first and last time in life, she is able to open her heart to her only child, for a long time the dearest object of her affection, and still the dearest after that Being to whom, alone, worship is due,—think of this, and say whether she has not made some atonement. Not to you, my poor boy,—no atonement to you, my darling child. But judge how far it was possible for her, after having taken the first false step, to have acted differently; and know that her heart has suffered and bled, as only a mother’s can, while she has been forced to wrong you. Read here her sad story; forgive her while yet you have life; and mingle with your last prayers, uttered when so near the Divine presence, one that your mother’s soul may find forgiveness and repose.”

“Oh, my poor mother!” moaned Bulldon.

“At a ball, when I was in my seventeenth year, I first saw your father. He was then traveling in my native country, and was there distinguished both as a stranger



and as a man of high rank. Doubtless his remarkable personal beauty (you are very like him, my son) and his illustrious social position excited a large part of the admiration felt and often manifested for him by the ladies, and particularly by young girls, who were then my friends and acquaintances. His manners were as pleasing as his person; and his voice, which was both deep and melodious, moved me strangely, even from the time when I first heard it. He possessed the kind of information and accomplishments which would best make him a welcome companion to a young woman ever desirous of knowledge, and whose fancy saw the halo of noble deeds and of beautiful things around a noble man whose family had achieved them, or who himself had seen them. I had the fatal gift of beauty, and, what is not seldom equally fatal, an active and powerful imagination. Your father selected me, almost immediately, as the object of especial attentions. Such distinction was intoxicating to my young vanity, but not to my vanity only. My heart was irresistibly drawn to one who appeared all tenderness, all bravery, all manliness, all royalty, and who seemed to find in me alone the counterpart of these great qualities. Before he spoke of affection, I loved him with an absorbing, all-devoting love. And, when he told me that I was to him the dearest of all beings, and that, without my love, life would be for him a desert, I lay on his breast speechless for very ecstasy. To my innocent youth love meant but one thing,—marriage and constant companionship and union. I could not, at first, understand his intimations that other love was possible; and when at length I did, my protest against them was so emphatic as to prevent their repetition. Then he talked to me of marriage, but marriage in secret, unknown even to my father and mother, and explained to me the neces-



sity for this secrecy by saying that, through a family arrangement, he had been betrothed to a lady, whom he did not love, in his own country; that his future must depend entirely upon his seeming acquiescence in this arrangement, at least during his father's life, who had set his heart on the match, and would cut him off if it were known that he had married another person. He said it would only be necessary to keep our wedlock concealed until the death of his father, which must, in the natural course of events, soon occur; that then he should succeed to the inheritance, and, once in possession, our lawful union should be declared. I could not refuse to wed him. I had not skill to analyze his statements, nor depth of intellect to sound his arguments, nor strength or judgment to resist his pleading and my love; but I begged that my father and mother, or at least my mother, might be admitted to the secret. This proposition he firmly, almost sternly, opposed, and gave reasons for his objections which, if I could not see them to be forcible, I could not, at any rate, answer. Finally, after some days of intense suffering, from the conflict of diverse affections, and, as I fondly thought, of duties also, I consented to his plan. This was for me to leave my father's house, under the pretext of going to pass a week with one of my friends who lived in the city, an easy day's journey from our country residence, and where we were little known. Your father, who had taught me to call him Walter, was to meet me there, and take me to the house of an obscure clergyman, unknown to us, as were we to him. With such evident pain did I prepare to take my departure and bid my parents good-by, that they tenderly urged me to defer my visit. But I assured them I was very well, only a little nervous at the thought of leaving them and traveling alone. My father told me that, if I would wait a couple



of days, he could go with me ; but I said it would disappoint my friend, and persisted.

“When I reached the city I found Walter waiting for me at the stage-office with a carriage, into which he handed me, and followed, first giving some directions to the coachman. After driving some time, during which, terrified at the step I was about to take, I had wept, trembling, upon Walter’s breast, who vainly tried to comfort me, the carriage stopped. I found courage to look from the window, and saw that we were in front of a small hotel. ‘This is not a clergyman’s house!’ I exclaimed. ‘Oh, Walter, whither have you taken me?’ ‘Do not be alarmed, darling,’ he replied. ‘Can you not trust me?’ ‘Have I not trusted you?’ I asked. ‘Too much to hesitate now,’ said he. It was already evening, and the gathering darkness added to my terror. ‘What are you going to do?’ I demanded, withdrawing myself from his arm, which was about me. ‘What do you fear?’ returned he. ‘It is growing late. We can pass the night here, and to-morrow we will find the clergyman, and everything shall be as you wish.’ ‘Never!’ I cried, making a movement to open the door of the carriage. ‘Drive on, coachman,’ he commanded from the window,—‘anywhere,’ fearing to attract more particularly the attention of the hotel-servants, who were waiting for us to alight. The carriage rolled on, and, with many caresses and a thousand expressions of tenderness and love, Walter sought to dispel my fears and calm my agitation. ‘You have deceived me,’ I sobbed, feebly repelling his proffered embraces. ‘Take me back, oh, take me back!’ ‘That is impossible, my child,’ said he. ‘Whither would you go?’ ‘To my father,’ I cried; ‘take me to my father. Let me go home.’ ‘That cannot be,’ answered he. ‘There is no way of reaching your home to-night. Why will you be so



foolish? What frightens you? Have you no confidence in me? Can I not take care of you? There, there! be reasonable.' For a few minutes I remained silent, trying to comprehend my exact situation. Then I said to him, 'You know I consented to come here but for one purpose, and that was to become your wife. If you have changed your mind, if you no longer love me, take me to the house of my friend. You know where she lives. Take me there at once.' 'No longer love you, my angel?' cried he. 'Why, I love you more than ever, and to no friend living will I give you up.' 'But you must,' I replied. 'I will go to her.' 'What if I will not let you?' asked he. 'You cannot hinder me,' I replied. 'I will leave the carriage.' 'Oh, I can prevent that,' said he. 'Then I will call for assistance,' returned I; and again I made a movement to open the door of the carriage. 'My darling Gertrude,' said he, taking my hand with gentle force, 'listen to me for one moment. I am sorry I have so distressed you. It was cruel on my part. I did not intend that you should alight at the hotel. I wished to stop there myself, for a moment, on our way to the clergyman's house. When, however, you exhibited such alarm, I thought I would put your confidence in me to a severe test. Had you consented to do as I proposed, can you think for an instant that I would have permitted you, my own wife, as you are so soon to be, to do anything that might in any way compromise you? Sweetheart, such a thought never entered my head seriously. And, as I said, I love you, if possible, ten times more than ever for the spirit and correct feeling you have shown. Will you forgive me, dear one? There, put your head on my breast again, darling, and be sure no thought or purpose is there which your own pure heart would not approve.' Reassured and consoled by what he said, I suffered



him again to encircle me with his arms, and rested my head on his shoulder with renewed and strengthened faith and confidence in him. For some time no word was spoken by either of us, and the carriage moved slowly forward. 'Where are we going now?' I ventured to ask, at length. 'Oh, I had forgotten to give the order,' said he. 'I was so happy.' Then, putting his head out of the window, he said something to the coachman, who at once turned his horses' heads and drove rapidly in another direction. In a short time we stopped before a small house in a narrow street, and got out of the carriage. Walter was obliged almost to carry me up the steps of the house, so weak was I from the emotions which I felt. We were led to a small and neat but poorly-furnished parlor, where we were soon joined by a man of a pale but benign countenance, in the garb of a clergyman. Walter briefly told him our errand. He left the room, and presently returned with two women, plainly yet carefully dressed, whom he presented to us as his wife and his wife's sister, who were to act as witnesses of the ceremony. The rite was soon performed; the certificate of marriage, to which the names of the witnesses were also affixed, was signed and given to Walter; and we left the house. I could not realize what was taking place. It was all like a dream to me. When, however, we were again in the carriage, and Walter, tenderly embracing me, called me his own dear wife, I forgot all my fears and doubts in the sweet assurance conveyed by those words."

"Stop,—stop one moment!" cried Bulldon. "Oh, mother, my own darling mother, how I have wronged you!" And the poor fellow gave vent to his overcharged heart in a violent fit of weeping.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE LETTER, CONTINUED—CLEAVING.

WHEN Bulldon's outburst of feeling had subsided, he suddenly exclaimed, as if the thought had just come to him,—

“Then I am no bastard, after all!”

“So it would seem,” said his friend; who refrained, however, from expressing the suspicion which was uppermost in his mind, that the marriage, of which he had just read, was a sham.

“Go on, please,” urged Bulldon. “I can bear anything now.”

After giving the invalid a scrutinizing look, Allerton resumed the perusal of the letter:

“We remained four days in the city, and I was very, very happy. I felt contented with the present, and gave no thoughts to the past or to the future. We were constantly together, chiefly in our quiet apartments at an inn. Walter appeared to be the tenderest of lovers, and the best of men. Towards evening on the fourth day, the servant brought word that a person desired to see him in the office of the hotel, and he left me for a few minutes. Returning shortly, he handed me an open letter, saying, ‘Read that, my love,’ and, turning away, walked to the window. I took the letter with feelings of apprehension and vague terror which I cannot describe, and read it hastily. The person who had brought this letter was Walter’s servant, and, according to instructions from his



master, had come at once to deliver it, together with other correspondence, received by the last mail, at Walter's address in the country. This letter told him of the dangerous illness of his father, and adjured him to come back to his native land at once. After reading, I gazed at the message in a kind of stupor. Walter remained at the window with his back towards me. I felt that the summons was a decree of almost instant and indefinite separation. I could take it in no other light; for that he would hesitate to obey the call, or that I could accompany him, never occurred to me as possible. I was to be with my parents again at the end of a week. That seemed to me a fixed fact, as much as if it were already accomplished. I neither spoke nor moved. A kind of insensibility appeared to be creeping over me, when Walter, whose attention was, doubtless, attracted by my silence, turned round. Alarmed by my paleness and strange tranquillity, he ran to me, took me in his arms, called me by many terms of endearment, covering my lips, eyes, cheeks, brow, and hands with kisses, and begging me to speak to him. My reply was an uncontrollable burst of weeping. He did not attempt to restrain this violent outbreak of a suddenly overcharged heart; but, seating himself by me, and drawing me to him, he silently let me sob upon his breast, bending his head from time to time to kiss my hair and forehead.

“At length I became calmer, but he made no remark. He only kissed away my tears and called me by endearing names. I could not entirely dry my eyes. ‘What will become of me?’ I sobbed. ‘You will be very happy, I trust, darling,’ said he, tenderly. ‘What are you going to do?’ I asked, almost daring to hope from his answer that he would not leave me. ‘Going to do, dearest?’ returned he. ‘Go back to my father, of course.’ ‘And



leave me?' I cried, with a fresh outburst of weeping. 'Oh, you cannot be so cruel!' 'No, my love,' said he, 'I do not intend to leave you.' 'And yet you are going away,' I answered, bewildered, and looking at him earnestly through my tears. 'Yes,' returned he, 'but I shall not leave you.' 'How can that be?' I asked, really perplexed, for it had not yet occurred to me that I could go with him. 'We will go together,' he replied, softly. 'Go together?' I repeated. 'Yes, sweet one, you will accompany me. I cannot part from you.' And he drew me closer to him. 'And leave my father and mother!' I exclaimed. 'Yes, my dear wife,' he said, looking at me very intently, 'to follow your husband.' 'But when?' I asked. 'We shall leave here to-night,' he answered, gently. 'Impossible!' I cried. 'I must first see my father and mother, and tell them all.' 'That cannot be, my love,' said he, calmly. 'But I must see them,' I urged. 'There will not be time,' replied he. 'I shall have to go from here this evening, in order to take the next ship. Otherwise I shall be delayed a week, it may be two.' 'But this is a very short time,' I pleaded. 'Too much for me to lose,' he answered. 'What!' said I, 'you will not let me even say good-by to my parents?' 'I am very sorry, darling, but there is no help for it.' He spoke very softly, yet firmly. 'But I cannot quit them so,' I asserted. 'It is very hard, I know,' he responded. 'And I will not!' I exclaimed. 'Do not say that, dearest!' cried he, passionately,—'do not say that, for it is to say that you no longer love me, and that you wish to part from me.' 'How cruel you are, Walter!' I retorted. 'Think what you ask of me.' 'I know I ask much,' he replied, 'yet it is only that the wife should not desert her husband.' 'What will they think of me?' I questioned. 'All will soon be explained to them,' he answered. 'But they will suffer so



much,' I pleaded. 'And shall not I suffer if you abandon me?' he asked, reproachfully. 'Oh, I will not abandon you, dearest Walter!' I protested; 'only let me go and see them once more, and bid them farewell.' 'Should you do that,' said he, 'I must let you stay behind.' 'No, you could wait for me,' I urged. 'That I cannot, my dear. It is useless to insist,' he replied, firmly. 'Then you may go without me!' cried I, almost angrily. 'My darling,' said he, with the utmost tenderness, 'do you know what you are saying? Do you mean that you will permit me to go away without you, my own precious wife? Have you already so far ceased to love me that you can be happy when we are separated? Have you already discovered that you love your family better than you love me? Then, my own love, it is well that I should depart alone, and seek to forget you. And know this, dearest, that if you persist in your determination, I must quit you, and quit you forever. For I could never again be sufficiently convinced of your love, if you now abandon me, to dare trust my happiness in your keeping.' 'Oh, Walter,' I exclaimed, clinging to him in terror, 'do not talk so! I will never leave you.' 'Then, darling, understand this,' he answered, in tones tender but decided, 'that I must go to my father at once; that I must go from here this very evening; and that you must go with me, or we shall be forever separated. Will you go?' 'If it must be so, Walter, I submit,' I replied; 'for I cannot lose you, nor would I cause you a moment's pain. But I so want to see my father and mother, if it could be.' 'I know, love,—I know,' said he; 'but circumstances make it impossible. You can, however, write to them.' 'Oh, what will I do!' I exclaimed, experiencing a momentary feeling of relief. 'And you will go with me willingly, darling?' he asked. 'Oh, Walter, you know I am all



yours !' I replied. 'Write your letter, then, while I make ready for our journey,' said he, kissing me tenderly. And then he left the room.

"Not till seated, with pen in hand and paper before me, did I realize how difficult was the task of writing a farewell letter to my parents in the situation where I found myself placed. What could I say to them? How could I bid them good-by without telling them that I was going far away? How tell them I was going far away, without telling them whither? How tell them whither, without telling them wherefore? How tell them wherefore, without betraying our secret and Walter's confidence? If I were to say only that I was going a long way from them, to be, perhaps, a long time absent, what dreadful surmises would be theirs! And what more could I say to them and not break faith with him whose love was so much dearer to me than their own? Again and again did I commence my letter, but could not proceed with it. My tears were flowing fast, and my suffering was great. At length I succeeded in writing the words which follow :

" 'MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,—My heart is almost breaking ; for I must depart further from my dear home without seeing you again ; without bidding you good-by, except in this letter. Oh, my beloved parents, forgive me ! I cannot tell you where I am going, nor with whom. Only I can say that I go willingly and hopefully. I shall be safe, and, but for this cruel separation from you, happy. Before very, very long I shall, I trust, be able to write and tell you how to address me, which I cannot now do. May God soften for you the blow, which I thus deal with averted eyes and bleeding heart ; bless and reward you for all your goodness and affection ; help you to forgive,



and, at no very distant day, restore to your embraces, your loving and distracted daughter,

“ ‘GERTRUDE.’ ”

“When Walter came back, I showed him what I had written. ‘That will do,’ said he. ‘My poor child, how much pain this costs you! But all will be explained by-and-by, and you shall have nothing to regret.’

“We set out that evening, reached the port in time, and embarked.

“As the vessel sped on her way, and the shores and hills faded from my view, a woeful feeling of desolation seized me, and a mournful presentiment, since so sadly realized, that I should never see my native country and my family again. Not all my love for Walter, nor all his tenderness to me, could dissipate the grief that oppressed me, or make me strong to resist it successfully. The voyage was marked by no extraordinary occurrence. For Walter’s sake I tried to be cheerful, and he thanked me, in many ways, for the effort. The ship reached her destination in safety, and we went to the city nearest the lordly residence of his family. There we took quiet, retired, yet sufficiently elegant apartments; and, as soon as he could leave me comfortably installed, Walter went to his father’s house. He had the happiness to find that the attack had not proved mortal, and that the invalid, although not restored to health, was considered out of present danger.

“Notwithstanding I had so deep and fearful an interest in my father-in-law’s death, I could but rejoice when Walter brought me this good news.

“Our life glided on tranquilly. I knew no one, and had no friend or associate but my husband. I was, or fancied myself, very happy for a time. I had written again to my parents, apprising them of my good health, and that



I was happy, save for the fact and the manner of my separation from them; again asking their forgiveness, and telling them how they might address a letter so that it would safely reach my hands. By Walter's direction, I did not name my own place of residence, but instructed them to send their letters to the care of a solicitor of whom my husband was a client, through whom my own letters were given to the post.

“Buoyed by the hope of receiving an affectionate answer from my tender parents, and all the news from my dear home, although often tormented with harrowing doubts, I was generally cheerful, sometimes joyful. For had I not Walter with me, and all to myself? We saw no company. Our only entertainment, other than the society of each other, with reading and music, was an occasional visit to some gallery or place of amusement. There I attracted much attention, as I could not but observe, and Walter seemed proud of it. At length the time within which I had dared to expect a letter from home elapsed, and no message came. I still hoped against hope, and my husband tried to comfort and encourage me by suggesting many accidental causes of delay. By-and-by, however, all such suggestions ceased to have any force, and the only ground of hope which remained to me was the possibility that my letter had never reached the hands for which it was designed.

“Grasping all the solace which the knowledge of such a possibility could offer, I wrote a second time a petition, more penitent, more supplicating than the former. But vainly did I wait and watch for a response, and at length I was forced to admit the terrible certainty that my father and mother had abandoned me, had cast me off, and that I was more wretched than any orphan. Still, I wrote again and again; but no answer ever came back. In despera-



tion, and with a breaking heart, I addressed a letter to my only brother, with whom I felt very little acquainted, since he had been, most of the time for several years, away from home, at school and college. But no reply was ever received.

“Walter seemed to feel my grief deeply, and spared no pains to console me. But for a time even his efforts were unavailing. I would not be comforted. I think that, after awhile, my persistent sorrow wearied him; perhaps some upbraiding words escaped my lips. At any rate, he felt my conduct as a reproach. He became less tender, almost imperceptibly at first. He began to be more away from me. His father’s health, which had lately become more infirm, was an excuse, perhaps the entire reason, for his increasing absence from my side.

“At length you, my child, were born. You were a great comfort,—you always have been a great comfort to me, my son.”

“Thank God for that!” interrupted Bulldon, who was intently listening, with suffused eyes.

Allerton read on again:

“Your father did not appear so delighted at your birth as I had expected. He seemed indifferent to you, and, as I thought, careless of me. I believe I did reproach him for this.”

“I am fairly into the world, at any rate,” once more broke in Bulldon. “Wait awhile, and let me look round a little. I want to realize my situation.”



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE LETTER, CONTINUED—ALL FOR MONEY.

AFTER a pause, in which, having carefully noted his friend, Allerton was pleased to see no signs of injury from the excitement caused by the reading of this letter, he went on :

“Walter was less and less with me. His increasing absences pained me exceedingly; yet I tried not to complain, while I knew that his father’s health was constantly, but slowly, declining. I had lately suffered too much remorse because of my own undutifulness, to wish him to fail in any point of tenderness, reverence, or devotion to his father. But I could not be so cheerful habitually as I was; and my ill-concealed sadness, doubtless, tended to render my society less agreeable to him than it had been. Perhaps, too, at times my welcome was not so warm or frank as formerly; perhaps I was silent and morose. For I suspected that he might have been more with me; that occupations other than attending on his father kept him from me. His apparent indifference to you, whose childish acts and budding intelligence were, to me, always new and charming, I could not understand or forget. He treated you with the passing notice bestowed by young men on the child of a friend, rather than with the affection of a parent.

“When you were a little more than four years old, his father died. I could not mourn deeply for a father-in-law whom I had never seen, and I could not but feel that



the terrible trial through which I had been passing was, or would now very soon be, at an end. After all the funeral rites were performed I had fondly hoped that Walter would be with me again, as of old. But in this I was disappointed. I saw less of him even than before. When I asked him, as gently and affectionately as I could,—it may have been reproachfully and somewhat severely, in spite of me,—the reason of this, he said that his time was very much occupied with affairs pertaining to the settlement of the estate and inheritance. So passed the time till a year had elapsed since his father's death. In all that period, though every moment seemed to me a month's delay, I had spoken not one word to him of his promise to make our marriage public and acknowledge me as his wife before the world. I waited and waited with an inexpressible longing for him to mention it first. When, however, he did not, and more than a twelvemonth had gone by since he was free to do me that justice, I took advantage of the opportunity offered by one of his short visits to me, and asked him if that promise could not now be fulfilled. He said not yet; that some obstacle, the nature of which I could not understand, forbade, at present; and then he turned the conversation. For two years more did I receive, from time to time, similar, but all unsatisfactory, answers to the same question; and, when I ventured to urge the matter, I only met with discourteous rebuffs.

“I think I ought to confess that my temper had suffered very much from such a trial. I suspected him not only of indifference, but of infidelity to me, and perhaps too often accused him of it. He would sometimes laugh at such charges, sometimes listen to them sternly, without making any reply, and sometimes reply with anger. Yet his answers never lessened my suspicions, and, while they



lasted, I would not be the open-breasted, loving wife to him that I had been at first. Nor could I always restrain my tears in his presence ; which was but another cause of irritation to him. Possibly it would have been different had I always appeared patient, unsuspicious, uncomplaining, and unchangeably affectionate. I cannot tell. But what he said one day, which I shall never forget, makes me think so sometimes. After an altercation,—for I had made some complaint against him, and, indeed, reproached him more and more,—I told him that he loved his dog Nero better than me, and asked him why he could not treat me as tenderly as he did the brute.

“ ‘Why,’ said he, good-naturedly caressing the animal, which was really an intelligent, faithful, and affectionate creature, ‘when I go out, Nero never complains or insinuates ; is never suspicious or jealous ; he only shows that he is sorry to part with me ; trusts me fully ; believes my reasons are good without asking them ; does not turn his head away when I would give him a parting caress, nor look unutterable reproaches, and refuse to bid me good-by in the usual way ; in short, he has faith in me,—a great charm and powerful attraction, my darling, which makes up for the want of many others. When I come back, he is full of joy, and greets me with unvarying affection, never asking me where I have been, nor what I have done ; never calling me to account for my absence ; never accusing me, either directly or by innuendo, of a dozen mean things, which must make a culpable man angry and an innocent man indignant ; never pouting and looking glum or spiteful ; never whining or crying, except to get at me, unless it be for something which he needs. Then I can caress him as long as I wish, and, when I am tired, tell him to go away, and he does not feel angry, or wounded, or indignant, but is contented to lie down near me or go



and amuse himself. And I am not obliged to talk to him when I do not feel like it, nor to listen to a parcel of wearisome nonsense out of his mouth, about how the cats have ill treated, or some little dog insulted, or some big dog slighted him, in order that he may not think I do not care for him, or that I do not esteem him intelligent enough to be my companion and share my thoughts. When I want to read, or write, or sleep, or muse, he is contented and happy to be in the room near me, and I am contented to have him there. And he knows I like him just as well as if I were patting him, and calling him pet names, all the time. And I know that he cares as much for me as if he were jumping upon me and preventing me from reading, writing, sleeping, or thinking. Do you understand it now, my dear?’

“I will not distress you, my son, by detailing the many painful scenes which, with increasing frequency, occurred between us, as I, growing terrified and desperate at this most unreasonable delay, urged and demanded of him, more and more vehemently, to take me out of the false position in which I had so long been for his sake, by certifying, if not to the world, at least to his friends, that I was his lawful wife. Before the end of another year I had learned the whole truth, or enough of it, at least, to explain Walter’s conduct, and my position was fixed for life. It happened in this way. Walter spoke to me one day somewhat sternly, and with a certain moody expression of defiance in voice and manner that I had not before seen in him, saying that he wished to have some serious conversation with me.

“I was startled by the strangeness of his bearing, and a sudden dread, the cause of which I could not explain, came over me. He led me to a seat and sat down near me. ‘My dear Gertrude,’ said he, coldly and formally,



‘you must not be too much surprised or distressed by what I am going to tell you.’ It seemed as if my heart would cease beating, but I said not a word. ‘I had expected,’ he continued, ‘to be able to announce our marriage on the death of my father, as I told you I would. But circumstances have not been and are not as I had supposed that they would be. It is now impossible for me to do so.’ ‘Oh, Walter!’ I exclaimed; but I could say no more. ‘For your own sake and that of the boy,’ he went on, ‘I must ask you to make some sacrifice. I find myself overwhelmed with debts which I cannot discharge. I will not deny that I have played recklessly. But such an admission does not help the matter. My creditors must be paid, or I shall be disgraced and ruined. The estate is so entailed that I cannot make it available to the extent necessary for this purpose. You have no dower to help me in the emergency. Besides paying these debts, I wish to provide for you and the child. There is but one way in which I can do this.’ ‘What is that, Walter?—what can I do?’ I asked, feeling ready to make any sacrifice of luxury, comfort, or wishes in order to help him. ‘I must marry again,’ said he. ‘Marry again!’ I cried; ‘that is impossible!’ ‘Not at all,’ replied he; ‘it is all arranged.’ ‘All arranged!’ repeated I, feeling as if I were losing my senses. ‘Yes,’ returned he, ‘all, except with you.’ ‘And what is there to arrange with me?’ I demanded, my faculties all aroused by a sharp perception of the wrong which he intended. ‘That you shall not oppose my plan,’ he replied. ‘But I will!’ I cried; ‘I will! I shall proclaim to the world that you are my husband!’ ‘Where are your proofs?’ asked he, coldly, but with a perceptible sneer. ‘Who would believe you?’ Then, for the first time, I felt how powerless I was. The marriage certificate, given to him on the



evening of our wedding, had never been in my possession. I had trusted him implicitly, and it had never occurred to me that I needed, or should ever need, this paper for my own protection. I did not even remember the clergyman's name, nor the names of the witnesses who were present when the ceremony was performed. Still, I could not permit such a crime, and such a wrong to my child and myself, without a struggle. 'I shall be believed!' I cried; 'I will denounce you! I will prevent the marriage!' To this outburst he made no reply, but remained silent, looking at me. The calmness of his look, and the consciousness of power over me which it revealed, produced more effect than could any words which he might have uttered. 'Oh, Walter,' I pleaded, 'how can you think of committing such an offense and such an outrage against me and your child? Think what I have already done for you, and show some tenderness, some mercy, now. I will submit to any privation for your sake. I will continue to live alone and ignominiously, as I have done, so long as may be necessary. But do not cast us off. What will become of us? Think, think only for one moment of my position.' 'But,' replied he, 'I shall make your position very easy.' 'Easy!' I exclaimed, scornfully. 'Easy!—branded as a wanton, with no possibility of clearing my reputation, of doing justice to my son, or of being reconciled to my parents, by showing them that, though indiscreet and wrong, I was not criminal.' 'It is a hard case, I know,' said he; 'hard for both of us. But it must be so. Now, listen to me carefully, and you shall see that I mean to do well by you. I am to marry a lady whose dower will enable me to settle a liberal income on you——' 'Think you that I would help you to deceive and rob her and then share the booty?' cried I, vehemently. 'Be quiet, and hearken to



me,' rejoined he; and continued,—'will enable me, as I was saying, to settle a liberal income on you and make the boy independent. He can thus be educated as a gentleman should.'

"'But I will prevent it!' said I, passionately.

"'Hear me out,' replied he, calmly. 'If you show no opposition to this marriage, I engage not only to make generous provision for you and the child, but to place the proofs of our wedlock in responsible hands, to be brought forward in case of my death without children by the woman I am going to espouse. This would, in that event, secure to your son the inheritance and title. On the contrary, if you oppose this alliance, and, in so doing, raise the question as to our nuptials, I will destroy all evidences of our lawful union, deny all you say, assert that you have been only my mistress, that the boy is illegitimate, and thus ruin any chance of his ever succeeding me or proving his legitimacy and taking his place with his peers. You would be regarded, not as an injured woman, but as a designing impostor, and all without accomplishing your purpose to prevent this wedding.' I could not reply. I felt as if I were turning into stone. All my faculties were benumbed. I sat, tearless and motionless, gazing at him. There must have been something strange in my look, for he arose, came to me, and, taking my hand, which lay nerveless in my lap, he said, 'There, there! you will think better of this on reflection. Take time to consider, and you shall see that it is the best thing to be done. I will give you a day to weigh the matter thoroughly; I have no doubt that you will then acquiesce.' And he left me.

For a long time I sat without motion, as if insensible, in a kind of stupor, unable to realize my situation. How long this had lasted I do not know, when you entered the room, and, running up to me, with a fright-



ened look in your sweet childish face, exclaimed, 'Oh, mamma, what is the matter?' This aroused me, and, taking you in my arms, I gave way to a convulsive fit of weeping. At length my tears and strength seemed to be spent. I was exhausted by the violence of my emotions. I could not think; I knew not what to do. I could only feel that I was completely in Walter's power, that an avalanche was impending over me, and that I and my darling child must be crushed. I was entirely ignorant of affairs, and had no one to advise me; and I believed it impossible to prove my marriage without the certificate, which Walter possessed. The only help that I might obtain must come from Walter himself. I dared hope that he would have pity on me and not carry his plan into effect. All through a sleepless night I was forming prayers which I felt must move him to abandon his purpose. I longed for him to come back, that I might begin my entreaties. Yet, when he came, a feeling of resentment and indignation, for a time, choked the utterance of any humble petition. But his impassibility, his unchangeable coldness, showed me that direct resistance would be useless, and his calm and determined mien inspired such terror, lest he should at once proceed to the accomplishment of his scheme, as drove away all courage and every thought of withstanding him. I sank on my knees, and, with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, I said, 'Walter, I have loved you tenderly, better than any or all other things in the world. I have been foolish, suspicious, jealous, troublesome; but only because I loved you so much. I still love you. I have given you myself, and all my hopes; have forsaken father and mother, friends and country, for your sake; have suffered the reputation of a wanton, and can never claim the respect due to a virtuous woman, unless you fulfill the promise on which I staked



my fair fame and my happiness for life. Do not cast me off, Walter; do not abandon me; do not make it appear certain that I am what I have been supposed to be. Pity me; pity our child; pity her whom you would now deceive. Oh, Walter! I will wait without murmuring,—I have learned to wait. I will complain no more, nor ever again ask you even to lift me from the false position where I lie; only do not hurl me into the abyss which you have opened before me. I will utter no word of jealousy, no word of reproach; only, if you cannot declare me your wife, do not declare me to be in the other and dreadful position. I will fret no more, nor ever be angry or ill-natured again; only do not desert me, dear, dear Walter,—do not desert me! What can I say to you, Walter? how move you?’ ‘Nothing, in no way,’ replied he, coldly and firmly. ‘I have told you that all is arranged for my wedding. More than this, all the papers, which will secure ample incomes to you and the boy, are ready to be signed. You shall not have occasion to say that you cannot now trust my promises; for my promises shall be executed, and you shall receive the papers on acceding to the conditions. All necessary proofs, coupled with my own solemn avowal of our marriage, shall be placed, sealed, in safe keeping, as I have already told you; with instructions to open and act on them in case of my death without issue by her to whom I am about to be united. These conditions are: That you shall never, in any way, divulge the secret of our nuptials during my lifetime; and that you shall in no way, either by word or act, oppose the union which I contemplate, or interfere with it ever so remotely.’ ‘But if you should die and leave us both yet alive, have you no care for the situation of her whom you now propose to defraud?’ I asked. ‘You will have the prior right, should she have no children, and I



shall leave you to fight about me as you will. Should I, however, have an heir by her, she will possess the advantage; for in that case you will never receive the evidence of our wedlock. On the other hand, should I have no child by her, you will hold all the cards; for the proofs of our lawful union will be placed in your hands. Do you understand it, my dear? I think that will be about fair to both. Besides, I rather like the arrangement. It will be like a game of chance,—for you two, I mean. But it is hardly likely that you will both, or, for that matter, either of you, survive me. I intend to live a long time.’ ‘But if I should not agree to the conditions?’ I asked. ‘Then I shall make no provision for you or your boy,’ he answered; ‘I shall destroy the only means by which, in any event, his legitimacy might be proved, and forever cut off any possibility of his succeeding me, as well as of the justification of your own conduct. Hard it may be, but necessary.’ ‘I will not agree to such a proposition,’ I cried. ‘I will never be your accomplice in such a crime. I will forbid your marriage, even at the altar. I will declare that I am your wife; and I shall be believed.’ ‘Very well,’ said he, quietly; ‘you must act as you see fit. I tell you plainly that you cannot make yourself believed where it is for my interest that you should not be, and I know what I say. Consequently you cannot hinder this alliance, nor shall you be able to bring proofs to invalidate the rite. I tell you, further, that if I leave you without your full consent to my plan—yes, without your having sworn to observe the conditions which I have named—it will be to destroy at once all evidence that could prove the legitimacy of your son. You have told me a hundred times that I did not care for him. Now let us see how much you care for him yourself. Have you decided?’ ‘Yes,’ I answered; ‘I will prevent this



marriage. Even the love I bear my child shall not tempt me to share the responsibility of such a sin, though only by conniving at it.' 'How can you be responsible for that which you can in no way control?' asked he; 'for I swear to you that it is impossible for you to do more than ruin any and every chance of doing justice to your son. Are you still determined?' I confess that I hesitated; yet I had courage to say, 'Yes; I shall oppose you.' He did not reply, but, calmly taking his hat, walked to the door, opened it without looking back, and was about to close it behind him, when I rushed forward, seized him by the arm, and drew him in again, exclaiming, 'Oh, Walter, Walter! have you no mercy, no sense of justice, no conscience? I entreat you, give up this scheme. It can only bring misery on all concerned——' 'If this is all you had to say,' interrupted he, 'it was not worth while to bring me back. My purpose is fixed. I have explained it to you. I have given you the best advice that I can. If you will follow it, all will be well. If you will not, yourself and your child only will be the sufferers. Your foolish whims about responsibility, as an accomplice in a crime, are all nonsense. You will neither commit nor can you hinder that which you choose so to designate. If you have any motherly tenderness, any affection; if you would not abandon your boy and blight all his prospects in life; if you would not fix upon him forever the stain of illegitimacy, you will consent to do as I wish. It appears that, of the two, I love him best——' 'Oh, no, no! that is not true!' I cried. 'Oh, what shall I do?' 'I have told you,' he rejoined.

"But in vain should I repeat to you more of this most distressing conversation. In vain should I try to convey any adequate notion of the torture which I endured, of the conflict which tore my breast, of how I resisted, and



of how, finally, he prevailed, and I agreed to all the conditions which he imposed, believing, in my fond affection for you, that I could not be culpable in respect to this marriage, since I could not be guilty of doing what I did not consent to, and what I could in no wise prevent; and believing, also, that in this way alone could I discharge my duty to you, my darling boy. I will admit that my love for you may have blinded me. But how else could I have acted? So, with many sobs and tears, I agreed, nay, solemnly swore, that, so long as Walter should live, I would not divulge the secret of our wedlock, and that I would in no way oppose his intended alliance. I now state to you most solemnly, my son, that when this consent was wrung from me, and when I took this oath, I had entirely forgotten all that Walter had said about providing for you and me from the dower of the woman he was about to deceive, or from any other source. I only thought of you, and of doing all that I could to make justice to yourself and to your fair name possible."

"I believe that! Oh, I know that!" cried Bulldon, in a voice which betrayed his agitation. "Oh, how, all my life long, have I wronged you, my poor, martyred mother!"

He turned his face to the wall and again wept a long time, silently. Allerton did not interrupt him, but waited till his emotions should have spent themselves somewhat before continuing to read.

"I say, Allerton," spoke Bulldon at length, "I sincerely hope it may appear that no evidence remained to prove that man my father."



## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE LETTER, CONTINUED—SEVERING.

PRESENTLY Bulldon spoke again: "Read, read,—please," said he. "I am impatient to hear it all." And Allerton once more took up the letter:

"The ceremony between Walter and the Lady —, whom he designed so cruelly to wrong, was performed. I cannot say they were married, though she and all the world believed so,—all the world except Walter and myself. For the nuptials of Lord X. and the Lady —, a really estimable person, as I heard from general gossip, were too important a matter not to be talked of far and wide. I will not attempt to describe my sufferings when that event took place. I had thought there was no pang sharper than those I had already endured. But I found my error then, when I knew that the festivities of a wedding were going on, and that he was personating the bridegroom. How I passed the day and night I cannot tell. All the agonies of jealousy, all the certainty of receiving the most grievous wrong, all the compunctions of a sensitive conscience for permitting that which, now that it was too late, my imagination, my wishes, and my love alike told me—falsely, perhaps—that I might have thwarted, combined to place me upon the rack. I could neither reason nor think. I felt that I was going mad. It is a wonder that I did not. My love for and sense of duty to you helped me to bear up against the crushing weight that rested on me.

"I received some papers from men of business, which showed that the provision promised by Lord X. had been



made for you and me. I refused to touch a farthing of it. I wrote to Lord X., and told him that I would not and could not use money so obtained. He replied, calling me a simpleton, saying that the money with which this settlement had been made came from the estate which he had inherited of his father ; that he had paid his debts from the wealth which he had received with the Lady ——, and was thus able to set apart a portion of his own income for our benefit ; and that, for your sake, I must accept and use it. There was a sophistry in this, which, however, I did not then perceive ; and, on your account, I overcame my repugnance.

“After some months, Lord X. called on me. At first I refused to see him. He urged that it was necessary for him and me to discuss and arrange some plan for your education ; and, again for your dear sake, my darling child, I yielded. The interview was very painful to me. I was constrained and very ill at ease. He seemed calm, controlled, and, as usual,—that is, as he had been latterly,—cold and inflexible. We agreed upon the manner of your education, and Lord X. continued to call, at intervals, giving as a reason for so doing, and to induce me to see him, that he must care for you personally, since it was more than possible that some day you might become his heir.

“Let me not needlessly distress you by recounting all the misery to be borne in such a position as that which I occupied, varied only by greater or less intensity rather than by any transient alleviations. Oh, how I thought of, longed for, wept for, and prayed for my dear father and mother, whom I had so abused, and who had so justly cast me off ! How I pined for some word of news from home, some sign of remembrance, some token of forgiveness ! But of all these I was hopeless. In you alone,



my dear son, I found earthly comfort and consolation. You were ever affectionate, and became more and more tender and considerate of your mother as you grew older. The mortifications on account of your birth, which you bravely endured, and for having been, in some measure, the cause of which I could not excuse myself, only made you dearer to me. All the pain which I suffered for that reason, and the tears which I shed in secret, you never knew, and I trust that you never may.

“Thus the time passed till you were sixteen years old. Your education was well advanced. You had always shown yourself ready and quick to learn, and were so far superior to most boys of that age in all manly qualities that I began, instinctively, to look to you for support, protection, and advice. But the ever-present memory of my dear home, of my fond parents and my proud brother, was to me a constant and consuming sorrow.

“One day, about this time, as we were walking together, my only brother met us. I recognized him immediately. Surprised and overjoyed, I stretched out my arms, and started to embrace him. But he refused to know me. I fainted; and you, my ever-watchful, my darling child, carried me into a place of shelter. You must remember this. It was not long ago. But I forget that it may, and, I trust, will, be long years before you read this. A few days afterward I sought out, and, by an innocent stratagem, obtained an interview with, this brother. But what an interview! I tremble now, as the scene comes back to me. It was just before my last illness, through which you watched me so tenderly. My brother would not embrace me, would not speak kindly to me; told me, sternly, terribly, that I had killed my father and mother and disgraced all my family; that my loving parents sank under the sorrow caused by my ill conduct and desertion; and



that he never wished to see or hear from me again. I tried to soften his anger, but only increased the violence of his denunciations. Perhaps I could have borne all this better had I felt the consciousness of such guilt as he laid to my charge. But to know that I was innocent of this, and yet not dare to defend myself, not dare to assert my purity, to say that I was lawfully married,—which I could not do, because of my promise and oath to Lord X,—ah, my son, this was terrible! Now you know the cause of that fearful illness. Now I am sure that you pity me, if you do not pardon me.

“After this meeting with my brother, receiving such dreadful news from home, and that bitter illness, I resolved to carry into effect a purpose which I had for a long time entertained, but the execution of which I had put off to the indefinite future. I had, for some years, obtained the greatest of all consolations from religion; and, considering that I needed every aid to repentance which could be found; considering, also, that should Lady —— and myself both outlive Lord X., what a bitter strife there would be; how she would suffer in turn, and how justly she could accuse me of sharing in the wrong done to her; considering, likewise, that, after you should have fairly entered on your career in life, I should be but a weight upon you, and a bar, in some measure, to your happiness——”

“Oh, mother!” broke in Bulldon, reproachfully.

“And social advancement,” continued Allerton, reading, — “thinking, too, that perhaps Heaven would be pleased to accept as some atonement this sacrifice on my part, I had formed the plan of retiring to a convent, and there, shut within its sacred walls, becoming dead to the world.

“Latterly I had felt another and a strong motive for achieving this design. A horrible suspicion had arisen in



my mind that I had never been lawfully wedded to Lord X. ; that the apparent marriage was a pretense and a deception. As I reviewed all the circumstances, it seemed more probable that this should be the case than that he should have dared to violate the laws and become legally as well as morally criminal. From this suspicion, which grew stronger and stronger, I could not free myself. Should it, fortunately for you, prove to have been unfounded, and should Lord X. die without children by Lady ——, as now seems probable enough, your chance to be declared his legitimate heir will not be injured by the execution of the purpose I have cherished. The time for carrying that purpose into effect, my dear son, has come. To-morrow you will join your regiment, and soon you will be far away from the land of your birth and all the mortifications to which you have been subjected. You will no longer need me. I pray, my darling, that you may remember all that I have ever said to you in favor of virtue and religion, and be wiser, better, and happier than your sorrowful mother. I shall not tell you whither I am going, and it will be useless for you to seek me. I fear that my resolution could not resist your entreaties, therefore I part from you thus. And because I have solemnly promised to keep secret what I have here written, I shall ask you not to read this letter till you shall be near your own death ; when you shall be, as it were, no more of this world. Even in doing this perhaps I in some measure violate my oath. But I trust not.

“And now, my son, whom I am never again to see on earth, farewell. Only in heaven, where I trust we shall meet, with the language of that blissful realm, can I tell you how dear you have been and are to me ; how grateful I am to you for all the sweet veneration and love which you have ever shown me.



“What can I say more, except to pray our heavenly Father, as I shall never cease to do, that He will be pleased to watch over, guard, and guide you, and, at length, unite us where there shall be no more parting nor sorrow, and where all tears shall be wiped from every eye?”

“Farewell, farewell, my dear son, my only child! Forgive, and, now that you are near the presence of Infinite Mercy, pray that pardon and repose may be granted to the soul of, your weeping mother,

“GERTRUDE.”

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## CHAPTER XX.

### RECOGNIZED.

“You must not laugh at me, old fellow,” said Bulldon, smiling, and wiping his eyes at the same time, some minutes after the reading of the letter was ended. He was the first to speak; for Allerton himself, much touched by the mother’s sad story and final message to her son, had remained silent.

“You will think me a woman,” continued Bulldon; “but it is not my fault. That rascally bullet unstrung my nerves, I think, and made a leak in my head.”

“Doubtless. But what are you going to do?”

Allerton spoke anxiously; for he saw his friend raise himself to a sitting posture.

“I am going to get up. I must think. I must move. I cannot lie here,” said Bulldon.

“Are you mad?” cried Allerton.



“Not at all,” replied Bulldon. “I am just beginning to be sane.”

“And insist upon killing yourself——”

“The furthest from it. I insist upon living in spite of the wound and in spite of the surgeon. If you wish to kill me, keep me tied to this bed. I tell you I must have motion, or my brain will be ablaze in two minutes. When I think that my mother still lives; that she has suffered, yet suffers, so much for me; that I have done her one horrible injustice all my life long, I cannot remain here quiet. I must find the way to free myself, and then find her.”

“Vain haste, my very good friend, which will only retard, perhaps prevent wholly, the accomplishment of your purpose,” urged Allerton. “Use caution till you are restored to health, or at least till you are out of danger; then act with such vigor as you may.”

“I know myself, Ally, and what is best for me to do,” replied the invalid. “There,” he added, stepping from the cot, and taking his comrade’s proffered arm, “let me walk a little; it will relieve me.”

To Allerton’s surprise, Bulldon walked, with a tolerably firm step, several times up and down the narrow room; and then, seating himself on the side of his cot, he said,—

“I shall not be fit to attempt another escape for some days. We must, therefore, find some way to be exchanged, if these fellows do not try to make us out spies, because of our disguise, etc. If we succeed, I shall then ask leave of absence; and if this is refused, I shall throw up my commission. Then I shall go in search of my mother——”

“Where?” asked the colonel, interrupting him.

“In a convent.”



“But there are so many.”

“In them all, if necessary.”

“You will not be admitted.”

“No matter.”

“And will make your search in vain.”

“Oh, no. I shall find my mother. I shall see her. I shall bring her away.”

“How?”

“I do not know exactly yet. I must think. But, if it cannot be effected otherwise, I will organize a band of free lances, and, when I shall have found her, will raze the convent, if they do not give her up.”

Allerton did not think it wise or needful to thwart his friend or try to chill the enthusiasm of his affection. Besides, he had not the heart to do it. He was aware, as Bulldon was not, of the charge already laid against them, and how improbable it was that any means which they could command should save them from a sudden and ignominious death. For himself, indeed, he had no hope. But he did not wholly despair in regard to his companion. He intended to exercise all his ingenuity to show that Bulldon at least was innocent of the offense of which they were, with so much show of reason, accused; but he could, as yet, form no definite plan. He carefully abstained from giving his comrade any hint of the great danger which threatened them, and allowed him to think that, so far as known, they were menaced by no worse fate than that of recaptured prisoners of war. The hope of saving his friend, in some way as yet unseen, made him note, with pleasure, indications that Bulldon's wound was not at all dangerous, nor so severe as had at first been supposed, and that it would probably seriously incommode him but a short time.

To tell the truth, Allerton did not look forward to the



certain death which awaited himself with any feelings of keen regret, save for its disgrace; and even this he was confident would some time be lifted from his name. He was an only child, and an orphan. Though the heir to large wealth, his tastes were such that the coarser pleasures which riches can procure gave him no delight. As such tastes were exceptional in the class to which he belonged, he had really lived alone; that is, without enjoying in any full degree the sympathy of his associates. They respected him, but felt that he stood somewhat apart from and above them. He had friends, but none who looked to him especially for protection or love. He was confident that his death would hardly be seriously mourned, or render any person, except his faithful well-wisher Bulldon, a long time unhappy. The result of his confession to Marion and the manner of their parting, now that the excitement and activity which followed were ended, oppressed him greatly. The reaction, also, after the overstraining of his nervous system, and the weariness caused by the last night's labors, fitted him to be the prey of the deepest despondency. Though for some time aware that he loved Marion with all his heart, he had really never before felt how completely his whole being was given up to that powerful affection. And now that he must make up his mind to suffer in silence the pangs of such affection unrequited, for separate it from his soul he was sure that he never could, he found himself weak as a child, without the wish even for resolution and elasticity of spirit enough to make him desire to live. He was ashamed of what he deemed a most unmanly weakness, yet to it he could not but surrender himself. He tried, however, and with tolerable success, to hide his sufferings even from Bulldon. It must be admitted, though, that at this time that worthy friend was not very observant. His thoughts



were naturally employed upon matters touching more nearly himself. For, in addition to his wound, and the disclosures made and hopes excited by the letter which Allerton had just read, another subject forced itself upon his mind. Convicted, as he avowed himself to be, of having wrongfully judged his own mother, he began to fear that he might have done injustice to another of her sex, namely, the fair beauty who alone had won his heart. He questioned with himself whether the facts which he had seen, and which seemed so fully to prove her unworthiness, might not be explained in such a way as to free her from any charge of infidelity or even of imprudence. The thought that this might be the case sent a thrill of joy through him, followed, however, by a pang of apprehension, as it occurred to him that, had he falsely judged and, as it must then seem, wantonly injured her, she might, with reason, refuse again to see him or receive any message from him. This fear did not, however, damp his ardor, or calm his anxiety to be free and engage in the solution of the riddles on which his hopes and future happiness so greatly depended. These hopes and fears in regard to the object of his love he made known to Allerton, who, feeling how readily he would forgive Marion for her hasty and unjust judgment of himself, gave his friend every encouragement. Bulldon's eyes brightened, a soft light seemed to overspread and shine from his pale but manly face, and his wound was, for the moment, wholly forgotten as he yielded himself up to delightful anticipations of the coming time when his mother should be restored to him and he to the arms of his sweetheart. As the captain's hopes grew brighter, the colonel felt, by the contrast, how utterly his had gone out; and he was calling to his aid all the stoicism of which he was master, when an officer, with a file of soldiers, entered the room,



and, leaving one man in charge of Bulldon, directed Allerton to accompany him.

“Where is he going?” asked the invalid. But the officer returned no answer.

“Can you not take me too?” again asked the wounded man.

“I can only execute my orders,” replied the officer. “March!” added he, turning to the soldiers. And Allerton, casting a look at Bulldon in which anxiety and tenderness were indescribably blended, went out of the room with his guards.

As they crossed the grounds within the fort to a building opposite that from which he had just come, Allerton saw Captain Trangolar standing near by, with a lady leaning upon his arm, whom the colonel did not know. This lady was Marguerite, Trangolar’s sister. Allerton saluted the captain, who courteously returned the greeting, and, with his escort, passed on. He noticed that the lady made a movement, as if of surprise, on seeing him, and that she eagerly said something in a low voice to her companion. What the lady said was this:

“That is Colonel Allerton. You are right, brother. The other must be Captain Bulldon.”

Allerton was taken to an office in one of the buildings within the fortifications, where the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong was waiting, and the two were left together.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## PROPOSAL FOR AN ALLIANCE OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE.

THE Honorable Mr. Clappergong had brought about this meeting. With the vanity and fatuity of not a few of his sex, he could only account for his own want of good fortune in a love-affair by assuming that a fortunate rival stood in the way. And he took it for granted that, if Allerton were set aside, or rather Marion's love for that gentleman, he could himself easily obtain her hand. The same thought was in the Honorable Pestyfog's mind when he laid his plan for making it appear that the colonel was a spy, and thus degrading him in that lady's estimation. He knew well enough that, if the young officer were sacrificed while his honor and reputation should remain untarnished, Marion's love for him would not only be increased, but would also be consecrated to his memory. If he could, however, abase in her esteem the favored lover, and make him appear unworthy of affection and respect, he believed that he himself would have much to hope for from Miss Devray's high spirit and impulsiveness; as he was confident that, during the reaction in her feelings thus produced, she might readily be persuaded to give herself to him, if for no other reason than to show the unworthy aspirant how ineffectual had been his wooing, and how little he was cared for by her. The Honorable gentleman had formed a plan through which to work out the favorite's destruction in his mistress's good opinion, and counted upon dread of disgrace and love of life as his aids in carrying it into effect. With this amiable motive he had caused Allerton to be



brought into his august presence. In the short time given him to consider, he could hit upon no plot so likely to succeed as the one he had adopted.

When Colonel Allerton entered the room, the Honorable Pestyfog advanced to greet him with well-feigned cordiality, something of which he might have felt at the moment; for he sincerely wished to make that officer his ally. But he was checked in middle course by the cold and formal manner in which he was himself saluted. With a show of easy frankness, the Honorable gentleman said,—

“I have learned of the disagreeable evidence against yourself and friend, discovered when you were taken, and have come to see if I can render you any assistance. It will be d—d hard, though, to do anything for you, if all that they tell me is true.”

“This is singular language,” replied Allerton, “from the man to whom I am, unless I be greatly in error, wholly indebted for my capture.”

“You are very right in that supposition, colonel,” returned the other; “but how the d—l could I know what you had been about? I learned from Cass that you were going to take French leave of us, and thought it my duty to insist on retaining you as our guests. But if I had known what was to come of it, ’pon my soul I think I should have let you go and do us what harm you could. In the ordinary intercourse of life we may have our tiffs and differences, disputes in politics and rivalries in love; but, when a serious matter like this occurs, they must all be forgotten.”

“The sentiments which you express are very generous, sir,” said Allerton, “and highly creditable to yourself.”

“No more generous than sincere, I assure you,” replied the Honorable Mr. Clappergong; “but yet not altogether



so disinterested as you may think. If I use my influence for you, yours must be used for me."

"I shall be happy to exchange services with you, so far as I may honorably," responded the colonel.

"Believe me, I would not wish you to do anything dishonorable, any more than I would do it myself," said the Honorable gentleman; and he continued: "You can lose nothing, nor would you really yield anything, by complying with my request, and consenting to aid me."

"Will you be good enough to state clearly your proposition?—for it seems that I am asked to make a bargain of some kind," observed Allerton.

"More correctly and definitely, an alliance offensive and defensive," replied the other.

"Oh! Let me hear the terms, if you please. What am I to undertake?" asked Allerton.

"I believe," answered the Honorable Pestyfog, "that neither of us will deny that we have been rivals,—have been, I say, for we are so no longer."

"Do you withdraw your pretensions to the lady's hand?"

"Oh, no. You have thrown up the game; and now I know that you never played it seriously. The seeming earnestness was a blind, a part of your strategy."

"Indeed!"

"I am now quite convinced of it," said the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, with great apparent candor; "but it was deuced well done; took me in, and the lady too,—almost."

"Really!"

"'Pon honor. And now to come to the point, since I am a man of few words in business. What I propose is this: either to secure your acquittal of the capital charge against you, or effect your escape; provided you will



address a letter, either to me or to Miss Devray, in which you shall state that, in paying court to her, you were not sincere, but only did it the more thoroughly to keep up your assumed character and carry out your purposes——”

“That would be false, sir!” interrupted Allerton.

“Remember, that what is true in love one day may be false the next. If you have saved any of the precious letters of an old sweetheart who has thrown you over, look at them and see how utterly false they are now,—all their passionate expressions, all their vows of eternal affection. Yet, doubtless, they were true when written. Doubtless, too, you felt enough of what you said to this lady, when with her daily, to make your speeches true at the time of their utterance. But the sentiments so expressed are not living truths, my dear sir; they are very delicate; a change of air affects them; they die early, and are by no means eternal. Such is the case with your love-affair, or flirtation, or what you will, with this lady. I only ask you to say so in writing, and to add the explanation that I have suggested.”

“And if I decline?”

“I shall let things take their course without interference. All things are fair in love, as in war, you know. We are enemies, as well as rivals, if you refuse. If you consent, we shall be no longer rivals, no longer enemies, but allies; and I can save your life and your honor.”

“Save my honor by inducing me to convict myself of acting as no man of honor could!”

“Poh! poh! All things are fair in war, even making love to a pretty girl. But I can see nothing so very dishonorable in paying compliments to a lovely woman, even in time of peace, though they be not sincere. It is a benevolent act, sir; it flatters her, makes her think that you will soon be ready to die for her, and that she



shall have the proud satisfaction of refusing you one of these days, and of seeing you expire at her feet. It causes her to feel well ; gives her the greatest gratification. Nothing dishonorable in that, I assure you, sir."

"You think so?"

"Certainly."

"You propose a very easy way to get out of an ugly scrape ; for I am aware of the odds against me."

"Nothing easier, in fact."

"Yes, 'it is as easy as lying.'"

"Then you will write the letter?"

"Excuse me, please."

"You mean that you will not?"

"As near as my meaning can be stated."

"You prefer to take the chances?"

"Yes. I'll be hanged first."

"Perhaps you will change your mind after reading this letter, which I am commissioned to deliver. It was given to me open, as you see it."

Here the Honorable Mr. Clappergong handed to his rival an unsealed note, the one which he had himself received, without superscription, and went on to say,—

"Doubtless you know the handwriting. At any rate, you will recognize the signature."

Allerton did recognize both the handwriting and the signature. The note contained only the following words :

"You will please spare me the pain of seeing, and even of refusing to see, you again. After what has transpired there cannot be so much as friendship between us. Call yourself to my recollection in no way ; but let me concede to you the greatest indulgence in my power, which is, utterly to forget yourself and your persecutions.

"MARION DEVRAY."



As Allerton finished reading this letter, he showed no other sign of emotion than an extreme paleness, which overspread his dark features.

“Permit me,” said the Honorable Pestyfog, “to urge the reasonableness of my conviction that you can lose nothing by complying with my request, or rather making the proposed treaty with me; that there could now be no impropriety in writing such a letter as I have suggested; but that, on the contrary, you would in so doing act like a man of spirit, and deprive the young woman of her triumph.”

“I have no wish to deprive her of any triumph which she can enjoy, or deny her any satisfaction,” replied the other. “I deceived her. Many palliations of my conduct could be pleaded, no doubt; but yet I deceived her, and I cannot reproach her for resenting what she has so much reason to regard as a base affront. My respect, esteem, and affection for her remain unchanged. I cannot attempt to humiliate her further, or to revenge myself; especially by such a wanton insult, and a falsehood so mean, as those you propose.”

“You will not pretend to say that you would not tell a lie to save your life?”

“Perhaps I might; I cannot be certain. But never such a lie.”

“Very well. I have made you a fair offer.”

“I am much obliged to you. But pardon me if I say that I cannot quite see how you could profit by my acceptance of your proposal.”

“I will explain. I am talking very frankly with you, as you may perceive. The truth is, that young lady is quite upset by the necessity imposed upon her to treat you severely, as she thinks. And there may be a lingering doubt as to whether she has been perfectly just, you



see. Her powerful imagination, and her sensitive love of justice, may cause her some qualms of conscience, and retard her action in my favor, in order that reparation, should it appear to be due, may not be wholly beyond her power. Note that I take a view the most favorable to you that can be. Now, were she to know that you never have been serious in your attentions, that you never really loved her, especially if the assurance were coupled with a fact which should wound her pride and pique her, she would naturally rush into my arms, you know——”

“Death and——” broke in Allerton, but stopped before the ejaculation had entirely escaped his lips.

“——for protection,” continued the Honorable gentleman, quietly. “She has long been acquainted with me, knows and appreciates my love, and you would help me to a wife whom you can never have. Do not emulate the dog in the manger, my dear sir. Use your magnanimity, and take your life as the reward.”

Allerton evidently made a strong effort to control himself, and said, with forced calmness,—

“Before doing this, I ought to be convinced that you can, as you say, save my life and that of my friend. What evidence of such power have you to offer?”

“Why, sir, if I can prove that you are no spy at all; that your disguise was worn for no dishonorable or illegal purpose; that some one else, without your knowledge, placed those drawings in your boot?”

“Go on, if you please.”

“What did you ever do to turn that d—d Cass against you?”

“Cass?”

“Yes. Can you think of nothing? Why did he betray you to me? Why did he bring the boots from your



room late in the morning, while you were yet in the garden, after I left you? He is quite intelligent enough to play such a trick, if he wished to be revenged on you. What cause had you given him?"

"None, that I am aware of; certainly none intentionally," replied Allerton, wondering and questioning in his own mind whether Cass could really have played him false. He was a good judge of men, and had confidently trusted that servant to the utmost. Somebody had, however, been treacherous.

"I am sure that I could work up evidence enough to convict that fellow of the trick," said the Honorable Mr. Clappergong. "He would receive some light punishment, perhaps, and you would get off scot-free. Should I fail in this, I pledge you my word that I could and would procure your acquittal in some other way, or effect your escape. I can count upon my influence with those who have you in charge. I got their places for them. Will you consider my proposition favorably?"

"No, sir. Let us discuss it no more, if you please."

"As you will. But I would recommend that you think very carefully before giving your final answer."

"I need no further reflection. I have, however, one favor to ask. My friend and comrade surely ought not to suffer for my misfortunes. Exert your influence for him. You can easily set him free. There is no rivalry, nor has there been, between you. Be magnanimous yourself, then, and relieve him from this charge, if you possess the skill and power which you claim."

"Impossible, sir! He must stand or fall with you in this matter; another reason why you should agree to my terms."

"Circumstances have given you great advantages as a tempter. I would do that to save him which I would not



do to save myself. But neither for myself nor for him would I do what you ask,—lie against my own soul, and against the woman who, if I know myself, is dearer to me than life. This is my final answer.”

“Very well, sir,—very well. Since you despise my kindness, you shall learn to respect my power.”

“And your vindictiveness. I have no doubt you will do your worst, and that your worst is very bad. Love of honor and the wish to do my duty led me to the field, where my life must be constantly exposed. I cannot turn craven now that the crisis is at hand. It is sure to come, and it comes but once. Will you permit me to go back to my friend?”

“D—n you, yes! the sooner the better.”

Here the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong, with ill-concealed rage, called in the officer, who reconducted Allerton to the room in which Buldon awaited him with impatience.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

EMBARRASMENTS—A GEM GIVES LIGHT—A FORERUNNER.

ONLY when Marion, with her companions, reached the fort, and she was expecting momentarily to meet her father, did the embarrassments of her situation, and the difficulties of her undertaking, appear to her clearly. General Devray was wholly ignorant of her acquaintance, even, with the prisoners. How could she account for her great interest in their fate? How could she, so earnest a partisan, try to save from merited punishment two men who had, to all appearance at least, unscrupulously and



most indelicately abused the hospitality of her father's house, and the confidence placed in them by his family? How seek to screen persons who had enlisted in their shameful service the noblest qualities of generous entertainers only to betray them in the most dishonorable manner? True, she believed that they were guiltless of any unworthy act or intention. But what could her simple woman's faith in their innocence and honor avail when opposed by the facts which could not be denied? Certainly she should have to explain to her father why, in the face of such facts, she so earnestly wished his interposition in favor of the accused. She felt that she ought to do what she instinctively desired, and what was most consistent with her frank and loyal character,—namely, tell him the whole story of her acquaintance with the captives, and confess her love for Allerton. She knew that, however her father might oppose such an inclination on the part of his daughter, however indiscreet and ill directed he might regard it, she could be sure of his kindly respect and tender sympathy in making him her confidant and going to him as to her best friend in trouble. She would ask nothing but that the lives of the unfortunate young men should be spared; if it were beyond her father's power to grant that request, she would pray that the execution might be delayed, confident that the innocence of the accused would be made clear if a little time were allowed for the preparation of their defense. Poor girl! Her wishes and affections were the grounds of her belief. She drew conclusions from what she felt in her heart should be the truth, not from the actual and inexorable facts, which alone could be considered by a court.

Her father had not yet arrived. Trangolar and Sister Marguerite had gone to the fort, and, during their ab-



sence, Marion suffered great impatience for their return, which, together with the desire to see and make all the amends in her power to Colonel Allerton for what she had said and done when last they saw each other, and anxiety for her father's coming, agitated her most painfully. She could not force herself to stay quietly in the house. It seemed like a prison to her; and, going out, she walked up and down the road by which the captain and his sister would return.

As she was thus employed, often looking anxiously towards the gate through which Trangolar and Marguerite must come out, a soldier of the lower class approached her. He appeared somewhat shy or cautious, frequently looking furtively around, as if to see if he were observed. No person was near at the time, and, touching his cap awkwardly, he bade Marion good-day.

"If you please, ma'am," said he, "I should like to show you something."

"What is it?" asked she, stopping.

"This, if you please, ma'am," he answered, drawing from his pocket a piece of dirty paper clumsily wrapped together, which he unfolded, and, taking out the object of his care, handed it to her. It was a large and valuable gem, bearing a curiously-engraved device, and had apparently been set in a signet-ring.

"Where did you get this?" asked Marion, quickly, as soon as she had glanced at the stone. And she went on to examine it carefully with evident marks of interest.

"Well, I—I found it, ma'am, if you please; that is, one of the prisoners gave it to me," said the man, with some hesitation.

"And why do you show it to me?" she asked.

"Why, ma'am, I thinks maybe you would like to buy it," he replied. "It's too fine for such as me to keep."



“Will you not tell me truly where you found it?” demanded Marion, looking directly at the man.

“Why, haven’t I told you? Though I don’t see why I need,” returned the soldier. “We picks up a good many things after a fight, and maybe that’s one of ’em,” he continued, evasively.

Some suspicion or conviction was plainly working in Marion’s mind. She turned the stone over and over, scrutinizing it minutely.

“How much do you ask for it?” she inquired, presently. The man named his price.

“If you will tell me honestly how you came by this jewel,” said she, “I will buy it and give twice as much as you ask.”

“Why, ma’am, you don’t want to get a poor feller like me into a scrape, do you?” he replied, evidently tempted by desire for gain, but at the same time reaching out his hand for the gem. Marion still held it.

“No, my friend,” said she, “I have no wish to bring you into any trouble. I am very anxious to know how and where you obtained possession of this stone. It may be of great importance that I should know; and, if you will tell me the whole truth, I will engage that no harm shall come to you in consequence.”

“Yes, miss,” said the man, slowly; “but how do I know that?”

“Do you know who I am?” asked Marion, in reply.

“No, ma’am,” answered he, after looking at her for a moment a little askance.

“I am the daughter of General Devray, your commander,” said she. The dignity, majesty even, of her mien, as she said this, was very imposing, and the man appeared to be satisfied that she spoke the truth and had power to fulfill her promise.



“Why, you see, ma’am,” said he, after some further hesitation, “I was one of the company that caught the spies,—them that’s now in the fort. I saw ’em take the papers out of one of ’em’s boot. And while they was a lookin’ at them papers, and the boot was a layin’ there on the ground, I felt a kind of curious like to see if there weren’t nothin’ else in it. So I jest picks it up and fumbles into it. And when I fumbles into a thing I generally goes to the bottom of it, ma’am. Well, clear down there, a’most to the heel of the boot, I feels somethin’ hard. ‘What’s that?’ says I to myself. So I jest pulls it out and sees that there jewel, ma’am. Nobody wasn’t a lookin’ at me jest then, for they was all a seein’ after the papers, and a takin’ care of the prisoners, and a tryin’ to catch the horses as weren’t killed. So, you see, ma’am, as this was plunder, I jest thought I’d keep it to myself, and say nothin’ about it to nobody. And no more have I, ma’am, only to you. So I hopes you won’t be hard on a feller, miss; for if the captain should hear of it he’d make a devil of a row, and where’d be the use?”

“Is this the exact truth?” asked Marion, looking steadily at the man, while a gleam of unusual animation, almost of exultation, could be seen in her face.

“Yes, ma’am. It’s jest the whole truth, and that’s all about it,” he replied, emphatically.

“Would you swear to this if I should ask you?” she demanded.

“Yes, ma’am. I’d swear to it quick enough, and as many times as would suit you; only I’d rather not have anything said about it, if you please, ma’am,” he answered.

“But I have said that I would hold you harmless, and I will do so,” argued the lady. “Yet you must be guided by me, and do as I tell you.”



“Well, ma’am, I am willin’ to do that, if you’ll keep your word with me,” returned the soldier.

“Then you must be ready to come to me if I send for you; to do what I tell you; and to answer any questions I may ask you about this matter,” said she.

“I’ll come to you right away, if I’m not on duty,” said he. “But if I’m on duty, you know, ma’am——”

“Oh, I will take care of that,” interrupted she. “What is your name?”

“Jim Hunter, private in Company A of the Tenth Regiment of Cavalry.”

“Very well, Jim; here is your money. Remember, you are to come to me if I send for you.”

“I can’t come to you too often, ma’am, and much obliged to you.” And, touching his cap, the soldier walked away.

At this moment Marion caught sight of Trangolar and Sister Marguerite, who had just come out of the fort, and, putting the stone carefully in her purse, she hurried to meet them.

Trangolar informed her that a message had been received from General Devray, stating that he was detained, and requesting the captain to await his coming at the fort; that a dispatch had been sent to ask the general what course should be followed in regard to the prisoners, whose real names he mentioned; and that the authorities at the fort were now awaiting his answer.

On hearing this, Marion’s perplexity and distress were very much increased. Since she had got possession of the gem and learned how the soldier came by it, her anxiety to see her father without delay was greater, if possible, than it had been before. Now she knew not which way to turn for the help so urgently needed. It appeared as if all the chances of fortune had combined against her. When they looked propitious, it was only to tantalize. An overwhelm-



ing weight of responsibility seemed to rest upon and crush her. She felt an almost resistless inclination to yield to the torpor of despair, sink down upon the earth, and combat no more the current of events against which her struggles seemed so vain. By a mighty effort, however, she roused herself, and determined to wait, with as much calmness as possible, her father's answer to the dispatch which had been sent to him, and then, as a last resort, if it should be necessary, ride to the general and obtain at least a delay for the accused.

Meantime Sister Marguerite had told Sister Mary what she had discovered at the fort, namely, that the prisoners were unquestionably the persons whom they sought, since she had seen and recognized Colonel Allerton ; that Captain Buldon had been wounded, but was now apparently out of danger, although still very feeble ; that they were both held as spies ; and that no strangers would be permitted to visit them before their trial.

Both Sister Marguerite and Sister Mary showed great commiseration for, and sympathy with, the unfortunate officers. As she imparted her information, Sister Marguerite was affected to tears, and her words, at times, were made almost unintelligible by sobs. Sister Mary listened with painful attention, clasped her hands, and, raising her eyes to heaven, remained a long time in that posture, so pale and motionless that she might have been taken for an exquisite statue of the Madonna pleading silently with the Infinite Father, save that her lips moved, and tears followed one another from their hidden fountains, ran over her marble cheeks, and fell upon the neat white covering carefully folded on her bosom.

“His will must be accomplished, my child. May He give us all grace and strength to submit uncomplainingly!” said Sister Mary at length to Sister Marguerite, who,



having thrown herself on her knees and buried her face in Sister Mary's lap, was weeping bitterly.

"But Trig says they must be convicted, and will certainly be executed," replied Sister Marguerite between her sobs.

"Only if it be His will, my child. And if so, let us learn to bear it. Think how light are our sorrows compared with some that have to be endured. And let us remember that our mission as women and Sisters is to console. We shall be allowed to see and comfort them after their trial. But we can do something before. We can let Captain Buldon know that his mother yet lives to pray for him. I have a letter which I will open, and probably it will reach him if sent unsealed. It will serve to strengthen and prepare him to meet her, should the Father of Mercies grant them to enjoy this great happiness. In his present condition the surprise and shock would be too great, unless he were first made ready."

Hereupon Sister Mary took from a little satchel, which she carried, a letter, unsealed it, and continued,—

"Let us go to the officer on duty, and beg him to have this letter delivered."

Sister Marguerite restrained, as well as she could, her tears, and together they walked to the fort. The officer who presented himself looked sharply at them, turned over the letter, opened it, glanced at its contents, and, courteously enough, promised that it should be properly delivered without loss of time.

The Sisters then returned to the room whence they came. Only those who, with ready sympathies, have been placed in similar situations, can conceive with what agony they prayed for the unlucky prisoners, and how fully the inmost recesses of their hearts were laid bare before the throne of Infinite Pity.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## A DISCLOSURE.

AFTER Allerton went out to meet the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, Bulldon lay down upon his bed again, and gave himself up to earnest and painful reflections on their present situation. Before long, however, his thoughts turned to the past, to his early home, to his tender mother and her sad story, and to his own career thus far, and the misfortunes which seemed to throng upon it. Nor was the woman who had been so dear to him, and who had so shamefully deceived him, absent from his mind.

After the first passionate fits of jealousy and anger had worn themselves out, and he could reason with comparative calmness, he had not thought it more just or manly, though it might be, as the false phrase goes, more high-spirited, to cast off and treat with contempt the woman whom he had loved, whose heart, in noble and ennobling trust, had rested on his own. If, in fact, she were lost to him, he could tenderly mourn for her, and for his faith lost with her; he could not despise her, nor even cherish anger against her.

Besides, as has been said, he had begun to doubt his own wisdom and justice in so rashly condemning his darling unheard. He had loved, and still loved, this woman so sincerely that, when the first strong feeling of indignation had passed away, his heart yearned towards her and sought out every excuse which could be found for, and every explanation of, her conduct. And, that some satis-



factory explanation could be given, he now not only wished, but began ardently to hope. He longed to be free from the toils of captivity, that he might communicate in some way with this lady, ask her forgiveness for his intemperate haste, and hear her reasons for a scene so unexpected and so distressing to him. Then, as his mind dwelt more particularly on that scene, and his imagination pictured it vividly, he believed, for the moment, that no explanation of such duplicity could be made which was not itself intended to deceive, and felt that he might be justified in denouncing the unfaithful girl as the most heartless and unworthy of her sex.

Yet love and hope soon cast their brilliant colors over the future again, and he gave himself up to the delicious charm which they wrought.

From the reverie which now delighted him he was aroused by the voice of the soldier who was keeping guard in his room.

"Rather a bad business, captain," said the man.

"Oh, it is only a scratch. I shall be up presently," replied Buldon, thinking that the soldier alluded to his wound.

"Rather an unpleasant way to go up, though, captain," rejoined the man.

"How so, my good friend?" asked Buldon.

"Well, there's no accountin' for tastes, they say, and there may be some as don't mind bein' pulled out of this world by the neck. But it wouldn't suit me, anyhow. I never had a fancy for hangin'," answered the soldier.

"I must confess that I do not understand you," said the captain. "Why do you speak of hanging?"

"Because, when a feller happens to get caught a playin' the spy, like you and your friend out there, it's the most



nat'ral thing in the world to speak of, I should say," responded the other.

"Playing the spy!" exclaimed Bulldon.

"Oh, of course not! We all knows that. And we all knows, too, that you was disguised in our uniforms just to help us, of course; and your friend the colonel there had them papers in his boots just for safe keepin'; and he hadn't no notion of ever showin' 'em to nobody. Oh, it's plain enough you weren't a playin' the spy. And that's what makes it so hard for both of you; for it's mighty hard to have a feller's neck stretched just for doin' nothin'. And I pities you, upon my soul I does, captain." And, casting a disdainful look on the officer, the man walked towards the window.

Bulldon looked at him some time in silence, unable to determine whether he were maliciously trying to tease him, or were talking honestly according to his understanding of the matter.

"Look here, my good friend," he said, at length, "you know I was wounded when the attack on us began, and my companion has told me nothing of what happened. So you see I am wholly ignorant. Are we indeed accused of being spies? And what do you mean by the papers in Colonel Allerton's boots?"

"What! don't you really know nothin' about it? That's odd, though. But I'll tell you all the same," replied the soldier; and he continued: "Why, you see, we had a pretty sure thing of it from the beginnin'. Mr. Clappergong ain't the man to play when he ain't right certain that he's goin' to win. He had found out, somehow, that you wasn't what you made believe, and that you was a goin' to take French leave. They say he found a good place and listened to what you and the colonel was a sayin'. At any rate, he knowed all about



it; and he knowed all about them papers, too, for he told our captain to mind and look sharp into the colonel's boots if we caught him. And I heard him say so. Well, we went round to the other side of the timber where you found us. 'Cause, you see, he knowed that you was a goin' into the wood cock-sure, if he didn't stop you. It stood to reason that you would come out somewhere about there. But, to make certain of you, parties was stationed to guard the other sides of the timber. That is, they was all to look out for you in case you got into the woods; for Mr. Clappergong he meant to overhaul you himself before you could get into cover; but, somehow, you was too quick for him. Well, when you came out and we saw you was a goin' to run for it, our captain he told us to fire, and so we blazed away. I saw that cussed nigger go down, and I've a kind of a notion that it was my bullet as brought him. You went down too, captain, and the colonel's horse took his last leap. Then we just tumbled onto you. You didn't mind us, and the colonel he thought it weren't no use; so he just does nothin', but tries to bring you to. And then we searched you both. But it was a mighty close thing about them papers, though. For we looked into the boots, and dove into 'em, and felt into 'em, and there weren't nothin'. But I knowed that when Mr. Clappergong says there's a hare in the bush, he's sure to come out if we beat long enough. So I just took up the boots, and I felt 'em all over very careful. By-an'-by I felt somethin' kinder thick and stiff like, and I thought it rattled. Thinks I, 'Now I've got it, for certain.' So I whips out my knife and just rips up the linin' of the boot, and, sure enough, there's the papers, all safe and tight. The colonel pretended, of course, that he didn't know nothin' about 'em; but it weren't no use. He was mighty cunnin' when he put 'em there; but



he ain't no more cunnin' than Mr. Clappergong, I can tell you. That's about the whole story, captain: so you see there ain't no great chance for you this time. And I'm sorry for you, captain, upon my soul I am."

Bulldon listened to this recital in perfect silence, and with feelings hard to describe. It seemed impossible to believe that Allerton had placed the papers where they were found, or that he had any knowledge of them. And yet how could the fact of their presence there be explained? He suspected treachery, but was hopeless of being able to verify his suspicions. Still, he could not but admit to himself that honorable gentlemen had been known to take their lives in their hands, and run the risk of an ignominious death, in order to serve their country or their party by bringing from within an enemy's lines such information as only a spy could obtain, and to esteem this a worthy and chivalrous action. Spite of his faith in that gentleman's probity, he found himself questioning whether Allerton might not have done this thing in the excess of his zeal for the side with which they were engaged. As is already known, the possibility—perhaps probability—that an attempt would be made to hold his friend and himself as spies had occurred to Bulldon. But so unconscious was he of acts which could warrant prosecution on such a charge, and so certain had he been that Allerton was pure as himself in honor, that there had seemed to him no likelihood, in any event, of their being put to serious trouble by an accusation of this kind. But now he was suddenly called upon to face a terrible doubt and a terrible certainty,—the doubt whether Allerton could possibly have been guilty of the conduct alleged against him, and the certainty that they must now undergo a trial and meet a shameful death. For he felt that they had no power to defend themselves against such proof as



the fact which had just come to his knowledge. Life had, within a very short time, displayed new allurements for him, and the conviction that it was now so soon to end in dishonor fell with overwhelming weight upon him; yet the present shock to his confidence in his friend's loyalty and nobility of soul was even more painful than the prospect of a disgraceful and not far-distant death.

For a time he appeared to be utterly dejected, and lay torpid and motionless, like one crushed by disaster. His usual buoyancy of spirit had been lessened by his wound and by consequent physical weakness, and the soldier's revelation came upon him just when he was indulging in bright dreams of the future and of what he would do when at length free again. He was, therefore, more easily cast down by this sudden blow, and felt more depressed than he would himself have believed possible.

While he was in the midst of all this perplexity and trouble, Allerton returned; and the soldier, saluting them, left the room, and took up his station outside the door.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### CONFIDENCE RESTORED.

ON coming into the room, Allerton was struck by the change in Bulldon's looks. His bright eyes had lost their uniformly cheerful light; his cheeks were drawn; and his whole face was altered. The smiles, which had never before forsaken their lurking-places about his mouth, had vanished; and he lay in a posture of utter lassitude and melancholy. The colonel hastened to him and inquired



anxiously how he felt. Bulldon, slowly, and with apparent effort, raised himself, and, looking gravely at his friend, said, in a low voice, solemnly,—

“Allerton, did you put those papers in your boot?”

The colonel started, and replied by another question:

“What papers?”

“Those drawings found in your boot when we were taken,” replied the wounded man.

“What do you mean?” asked Allerton, in return, evasively, anxious that his friend should be kept in ignorance of their actual situation as long as possible.

“Do not use subterfuge with me,” urged Bulldon, with more animation. “I have learned all about it. The guard told me the whole story while you were away. And I put a fair question to you, under the circumstances.”

“Was it necessary for you to ask me such a question?” replied Allerton, evidently somewhat hurt. “You should know me well enough to be certain that I did not. I had no knowledge even of the existence of those papers till I saw them taken from their place of concealment. And up to this moment I do not know what they were.”

“Thank God for that!” ejaculated Bulldon.

“Did you believe I had done this thing?” asked the colonel.

“No, never. I felt sure that you did not. But—forgive me—it was possible, you know; and I wanted to hear you deny it. I could not understand such a thing,—I was so much surprised. To be shot, or hanged, on a suspicion, or even a probability, conscious of his own integrity, and with a doubt in his favor which might become a certainty in the minds of all candid and fairly-disposed persons, could be borne with equanimity by a brave man, when there was no help for it. But to have the accusation



of dishonor, to all appearances, conclusively proved against him,—this was too strong, too bitter, and I confess that I have given way to its overpowering force. Let it pass now. You are all right. I am not deceived in you, Allerton, my friend. But the possibility that I ought to doubt you was torture to me.” And Bulldon changed his position, the expression of pain left his face, and he seemed to rest at ease, like a sleeping child freed from a troubled dream.

“Neither could I understand it,” said Allerton. “I was thunderstruck. But I suspect now how it happened.”

“What do you mean? Clappergong?”

“Exactly.”

“But how to prove it?”

“That is impossible, I suppose. He has us in his power. I have just had an interview with the Honorable gentleman. He proposed to get us off scot-free if I would help him to obtain Marion for his wife by telling an infamous lie——”

“And you knocked him down?”

“No——”

“I’m sorry.”

“But I wanted very much to do so, and was only restrained by a feeling of self-respect and prudence on your account; for I hoped he might be induced to use in your favor the potent influence which he boasts. He has no rivalry with you; and I do want to get you out of this scrape.”

“It is like you, dear Allerton. But do not think of that. I should not. Neither my self-respect nor my prudence would keep me from striking a cur, if he deserved it, or from flinging the Honorable Mr. Clappergong out of the window, if I had an opportunity.”

“I did not wish you to know anything about all this,



my poor friend, so long as it could be prevented," said Allerton, tenderly.

"Fudge, man! I am not a child nor a woman. Did you think I could not bear it as well as you?" replied Bulldon.

"You were wounded and weak——"

"That does not matter. We could have helped each other."

"I do not think there is any help in the case. The court-martial will surely condemn us, and we shall die like dogs, without even the satisfaction of having merited our deaths at the hands of our enemies."

"Yes, but they will put a stop to all these tantalizing dreams; strangle all false hopes; end these struggles after we know not what; place us beyond the reach of friendly treachery; terminate all betrayal of affection; free us from unmerited scorn, from undeserved opprobrium, from the stings of meanness, and the vexation of beholding the filthy worship of this world. There will be satisfaction in that, my friend,—satisfaction in that. Let us so regard and so meet it."

An accent of bitterness was audible in Bulldon's voice as he began his reply; but it quickly disappeared, giving way to the calm, deep tones of earnestness and sincerity.

At this moment the guard entered, and handed a letter to Allerton, who glanced at the superscription.

"Here is a letter for you, Bulldon," he said.

"For me? A letter for me?" asked the invalid, wondering how a letter could reach him there, and by whom it could have been written. His pale face flushed with eagerness as the thought darted through his mind that it might be from his mother,—or from his sweetheart, making the so-much-desired explanation, and opening the way for his return to the happiness he had enjoyed in the



assurance of her love. He could not prevent this thought, though his reason at the same time told him that the wish which suggested it could not be realized in the strange and painful situation in which he had been so unexpectedly placed. Opening the letter without looking at the superscription, he exclaimed, joyfully, "It is from my mother!" Then reclining again at full length, overcome with sudden emotion, he silently pressed the letter to his bosom, while tears suffused his eyes and coursed slowly down his face.

"Read it aloud to me, please, Allerton," he said, at length.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE WORDS OF THE LETTER.

THE letter was without date. Allerton seated himself on the side of the invalid's bed, and read as follows:

"MY DARLING SON,—I know not where or when this letter may reach you, but I trust that it will, at length, bring joy to your heart. I have heard of you from time to time, and rejoice in the belief that you are still alive and prosperous, nobly pursuing an honorable course in the world, and winning that respect which upright conduct merits. I feel assured, therefore, that you have not read the letter which I left for you with so solemn an injunction to guard it unopened till your final hour should be near. That letter you may now read. From it you will learn that I retired to a convent on leaving you, and my reasons for so doing. You will also learn my sad story, and understand how I was forced to be the unnatural



mother I have seemed. And when you shall have read it, I know that your generous heart will forgive me for so cruelly deserting you. Knowing all, you will pity me, nor love me less. In a convent I hoped to find the rewards of self-denial, and all the serene joys of a purely religious life. And this hope for awhile consoled me. But I did not gain, as I expected, the comforts of conscious well-doing. Doubts entered my mind, and I could not banish them. They grew more and more importunate, and made me question myself constantly whether I were really in the path of duty. And the more I questioned the more it appeared to me that I was shunning, rather than seeking and performing, my Master's business. I began to feel that I had no right selfishly to withdraw from the world and seek only my own salvation, trying to escape from trials, instead of enduring them, avoiding any occasion to minister personally to my fellow-creatures, and burying my talent in the earth. These words of our blessed Master, 'I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me,' were always sounding in my ears. Yet the force of tradition, of precept, example, and education, combined with that of a certain false sentiment, more romantic than religious, was such that I persisted a long time in my determination. For at first I looked upon all these doubts and questionings as snares and temptations of the devil. I prayed for divine light and guidance, and at length, seeing my way clearly, resolved to come forth from my retirement at the first fit opportunity, and do what I could for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned;



seeking all occasions to comfort and help any, 'even the least of these,' for His sake.

"About this time I heard of your father's decease, and, not long after, learned that Lady —— was also dead, ignorant, happily, to the last, of the wrong which he had done her. News found its way slowly into the remote convent whither I had gone, and some time had elapsed since the demise of these personages before I heard of their deaths. Had I not already made up my mind, I could no longer have doubted what course I ought to pursue. If the late Lord X. had not indeed cruelly deceived me, the way was now open to rectify, so far as its nature permitted, all the evil which I had been forced to inflict upon you. I could also vindicate my own conduct and character to my family. Perhaps affection for you, possibly the pride I felt in you, might now have had something to do in forming my decision.

"But I humbly trust that, independently of these considerations, I had found the right answer to all the questions that troubled me,—which was, that I should follow the example of our Master, who went about doing good.

"I left the convent, and, as a Sister of Charity, began the pious work of reconciling my family to me, and of doing justice to you, my ever-darling child. I wrote to my brother, who, in your presence, had refused to recognize me, and told him all my story. I trust that he has received my letter; although the civil wars and commotions in the country where you are, and in which he lives, may have prevented its reaching his hands. I ardently hope to hear from him that we are again brother and sister, and that I may then have the happiness of making you acquainted with the name and persons of your mother's family. I have kept this a secret from you so long that you will indulge me in continuing so to do,



until I shall learn that you will be welcomed to your mother's home and kindred as is due to your honorable relationship and your worthy character.

“After all my preparations were made, much time was consumed in reaching the place of your nativity. You had already been there, on your return from the East, and departed again to the country where you now are. When I knew this, I felt great sorrow that I had come so late, and had thus lost the occasion of meeting you and making all my confession and explanation with your dear hand in mine.

“I soon ascertained that, true to his promise, your father had left the necessary proofs of our marriage, and of your right to succeed to the family estates and title. It seemed then that but one thing was wanting to my happiness, which was, to clasp you again in my arms and impart to you, face to face, the knowledge of this tardy justice.

“I have written thus fully in order that you should not think your mother had acted with unbecoming fickleness and levity, in leaving the world, and afterwards returning to it in some measure.

“The estate and title which were your father's are now yours, made so by all needful proceedings and forms of law, and may be assumed by you whenever you will.

“But I could not remain away from you, my dear son. I have determined to join you. The friendly Sister of our order, by whose hand this letter will be delivered for you, is to let me know as soon as she shall have discovered your place of detention; for I have learned that you were taken prisoner some time ago. Then I shall speedily come to you, if our heavenly Father permit.

“What I have here written will prepare you for that



joyful meeting, which God grant may not long be delayed.

“I am already provided with means to open the way to you, when I shall hear where you are, and be summoned by Sister Mary, unless, before that happen, you shall have been exchanged and return to your mother’s arms.

“Take fresh courage, then, my brave boy, for it has pleased the All-Merciful to give us the hope of brighter, happier, and more useful days.

“And know, my darling, that your mother never ceases to pray for and love you ardently, as the one earthly object of her affection.

“Hoping, with eager expectation, to embrace you soon on earth, and, if not, by-and-by to meet you in heaven, I close this letter, and wait.

“Your loving mother,

“GERTRUDE.”

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### TEMPTED.

As Allerton finished reading the letter, he laid it down, open, by his side, and looked at Bulldon. Neither of them spoke for some minutes. How could the colonel congratulate his friend, when their condition was such that this tender and affectionate mother’s letter seemed almost like a wanton mockery? The captain felt no disposition to speak. His emotions were too various and powerful to find expression in words. It was to him as if, when his life’s brief day of darkness and storms was about to close, the clouds had suddenly broken away, and the setting sun



come out, gilding every object with a soft glory, and, for a few moments, causing the world to appear one scene of beauty, fit for the endless abode of love and peace; only to make him regret its brightness, dread and shrink from the untried storm and gloomier night so near at hand, as he, otherwise, could not have done. Wounded and weak as he was, he thought more of his mother than of himself, and of the terrible disappointment and affliction in store for her who had already suffered so much and so unjustly. In health, as in sickness, she was always first in his mind. And now, as in imagination he saw her crushed to the earth by this unexpected and most dreadful blow, he was entirely overcome. The joyful anticipations which she felt, and which, in other circumstances, he would so ardently have shared, only made his grief the sharper. His nervous system had not yet recovered its tone, and he could not restrain the tears which again flowed in abundance from his closed eyes.

“My poor Bulldon, my poor friend,” said Allerton, at length, “would to Heaven that I could invent some way for your escape!”

“A vain wish, my dear fellow! do not think of it,” returned the other. “They have us securely this time, for I am too weak to help myself or you in any such undertaking, and shall be till all is finished.”

“As for myself, I have no great reason to repine,” said the colonel, softly. “It makes very little difference to anybody whether I live or die, only I should have been grateful could I have ended my life by a death not so entirely useless; I mean one that could, in some way, have served my country and the cause in which I am engaged. There is pleasure in a voluntary sacrifice. The merit and the consolation of this even are denied us, since we are enforced victims. I could, however, submit to such a fate,



I think, without murmuring, if you were free. For you have now every inducement to live, and every hope that can make life alluring. I tell you frankly, as becomes our friendship and our solemn situation, that I am in a great strait. My heart misgives me, and I begin to doubt if I did right in refusing to accept Clapper-gong's proposition for your sake. I must not, and cannot, sacrifice you for what is, perhaps, after all, an overscrupulous sense of rectitude and honor. I will send for him and tell him that I accede to his proposal on condition that you be at once set at liberty and furnished with a safe-conduct back to our lines, if you think I should. Counsel me, my friend, for, if never before, I now earnestly wish to do what is just and right,—my whole duty."

"Do not talk nonsense, Allerton," replied the invalid, a little impatiently; "and, above all, do not say anything which ought to offend me. You shall do nothing for me which you would not do for yourself. I had rather die a thousand times than see you yield a hair's breadth of honor to that man, or swerve from the line of your conscious uprightness. A life preserved by the sacrifice of your just scruples would be worse than valueless to me. This may sound like fine talk, but it is only the truth. It is not a time to indulge in rhetoric. Let us hear no more of this, but take our chances together, as is right, and meet them with readiness, like brave and honest men and true friends."

"I assure you I spoke sincerely; for, indeed, I am in doubt," said Allerton, gently.

"Then doubt no more," returned Bulldon. "I am sure you were not wrong. What you are thinking of would tarnish your death and disgrace my life. I feel keenly the generous and noble impulse which alone makes such a thought as you have suggested possible to you; and



it touches me deeply,—more deeply than I can tell you. But it cannot be, my friend,—it cannot be. So put your mind at rest. You have done right. I wish this wound had not made me quite so much a woman ; but I shall do my best to play the man. I could almost wish that letter had never reached me. How did it come?"

"The guard handed it to me, as you saw."

"But where did he get it? And who is Sister Mary? And where is she? Why does she not come to see me, as she ought? It is clear, from that letter, that she has lately seen my mother. Besides, we are in prison, and I am sick, and we are both hungry,—are you not hungry, Allerton?—and strangers, though maybe not the least of the fellows about here, and she ought to visit us, etc.," said Bulldon, smiling,—rather dolefully, though,—his old spirit rising in spite of his mournful situation and the grief to which he had just before given way.

"I will find out what I can about it," said Allerton. And, going to the door, he begged the guard to ask the officer of the day to come to them. That officer courteously complied with the request ; but to the colonel's question he could only answer that the letter had been left by two Sisters of Charity, with an earnest petition that it be delivered to the person whose name was upon it. To Allerton's question whether they had asked to see the prisoners, the officer replied that they had not. Indeed, the Sisters, having been told that no one would be allowed to visit the accused before their trial, had delicately refrained from making such a request. The officer inquired respectfully after Bulldon's health, and was about to take his leave. Allerton followed him to the door, and, in a low voice, prayed to know when their trial was to take place. The officer informed him that they were awaiting orders from the general commanding, to whom the case



had been reported, which were now momentarily expected; and that, as soon as these orders should be received, a court would probably convene, since Captain Bulldon seemed to be strong enough to appear at the trial.

The two officers saluted, and Allerton returned to his friend, who had taken up his mother's letter, and was trying to read it.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### CHECKED, NOT MATED.

NOTWITHSTANDING the Honorable Pestyfog Clapper-gong had failed to make Allerton an unwilling accomplice in his scheme for obtaining Marion's hand and fortune, he did not for a moment relax his determination to carry that scheme to a successful issue. As a last resort he resolved to wring a consent from the lady herself. For that purpose he asked of her an interview at the house where she was waiting, with feverish impatience, her father's reply to the dispatch which had been sent him in regard to the prisoners. Trangolar was to communicate the substance of this reply to her at the earliest moment possible. Although that officer was convinced that Allerton and Bulldon were in reality spies, and must be so adjudged by military law, he felt the kindest sympathy for Marion, and every disposition to assist her efforts in behalf of those gentlemen.

The Honorable Pestyfog obtained leave to see Miss Devray by sending her a note, in which he told her that he could propose a way by which she might effect the



release of the two officers held as spies at the fort. But it was with the greatest repugnance that she acceded to his request. She distrusted the honesty of his purpose; yet, believing it possible that, for some reason unknown to her, he might be willing to aid in accomplishing her wishes, she would not deprive herself and the prisoners of the chance thus offered. Of his ability to assist her she had no doubt.

He was received with dignified civility, although habitual good manners could not entirely hide her feelings of aversion, and was asked at once to explain more fully the object of his visit.

"I have every reason to believe that, if I undertake the defense of the prisoners, in whom you feel so lively an interest, I shall succeed in making them appear innocent, or, at any rate, prevent their conviction,—which, practically, will amount to the same thing," said he.

"Then why do you not do it, sir?" asked Marion. "If you believe them innocent, and that you alone can prove them so, common humanity——"

"Oh, my dear Miss Marion, I did not say that," interrupted the Honorable Mr. Clappergong. "I did not say that I believed them innocent, but that I could make them *appear* innocent,—a great difference, you see. If I *believed* them innocent, as you were, doubtless, going to say, I ought, in common justice, to defend them without demanding any fee or reward. Common humanity would require this. Such was your thought. Now, common humanity does not require anything of the kind. Common humanity has a different way, quite a business-like way, of looking at such matters."

"Do you mean to say, then," demanded Marion, "that, though convinced of their guilt, you would for fee or reward screen them from punishment?"



“I have not said that, either,” replied the Honorable gentleman. “You will observe that I leave the question of their guilt or innocence in doubt. Of this doubt I am willing to give them all the benefit. I am prepared even to do more,—for a consideration. Something must be allowed to the claims of friendship and affection.”

“I do not clearly apprehend your meaning,” said Marion.

“My meaning is this,” returned the Honorable politician. “Without my interference the doubt of their guilt will not sufficiently appear to cause their acquittal. Their conviction will then be considered just by all men. I am willing to take advantage of this doubt, and, with it, quiet all my scruples, for your sake, provided you will give me such evidence of your interest in their welfare, and of your desire to rescue them from the fate which threatens, as shall warrant the interposition of my labor and influence in their favor.”

“And what must that evidence be?” asked Marion.

“First tell me,” he replied, “whether, if I should bring about their discharge, or in any way assure their safety, you would esteem it a worthy act, and be willing to regard me more favorably for so doing.”

“Certainly I should!” exclaimed she, warmly, rising and taking a step towards him, with her beautiful hands extended unconsciously in the impulsive earnestness of the moment. “I should be most grateful to you, more so than I can tell, and could never think unkindly of you again. Oh, you will do this,—I know you will!” she continued, entreatingly, putting her hands together and looking at him with pleading eyes which were suffused with tears.

“Would you then consent and promise to marry me the day that they shall be free from the charge against them?” asked the Honorable Pestyfog.



“Sir!” cried Marion, drawing herself up, while her whole appearance changed, till she looked cold and motionless as a statue. “I was not prepared for this,” she continued, after a short pause.

“Such a promise from you,” said the Honorable gentleman, “is the only evidence of your interest in this case which will satisfy my scruples sufficiently to permit me to interfere; and only on receiving that promise as my fee will I interfere.”

“I have already given you my answer to that question,” said Marion, her cheeks burning with indignation. “I have requested you not to continue this persecution. This is no time for its renewal.”

“But consider,” broke in the Honorable Mr. Clapper-gong, “I have only proposed that you should decide the fate of these men. If you think them guilty, let them suffer, by all means. No one will feel more satisfaction than I at the punishment of their most treacherous and unworthy conduct. But if, as it appears, you think them innocent, you have the means of setting them free. For your sake, not for theirs, am I willing to use my power in their favor.”

“Use it, then, and be assured of my lasting gratitude,” pleaded Marion.

“Your gratitude alone would not tempt me to run the risk of hindering the due course of justice,” answered the Honorable politician. “Only the promise of your love, secured by your consent to become my wife, could overcome my doubts and induce me to take their part. I confess freely that I would incur the risk of committing a wrong act, in such a case as this, for the reward of your love. I cannot pledge you, for myself, more than I have already offered. Think well of it. I am certain, and I say it on the honor of a gentleman, that without my aid



those persons will surely be convicted, and as surely executed. Love is selfish, and I am not magnanimous enough to save the life of my rival—for such I now know him to be—simply to restore him to you, and deprive myself of the dearest hope I have. You see that I speak frankly. Consider carefully what I say, before you refuse.”

“What assurance have I that you can do as you say?” asked the lady.

“The court will be composed chiefly, if not entirely, of volunteer officers who were politicians before they obtained their commissions,” answered the Honorable gentleman. “They were my friends and associates. They owe their places, principally, to me. I have done them many a good turn, which they will not forget, and may perhaps be able to do them many more; and bad ones too, for that matter. They know this, and will not turn on me now. They know, too, that I have helped them in carrying through more than one profitable scheme,—all for the good of the country, you understand. When a politician is on the bench, queer things may be done in court, and very original decisions procured. Lawyers are prejudiced in favor of precedents and authorities; regular officers have bigoted notions of honor and duty; but a court of politicians can be governed by reason,—that is, by motives. I am sure beforehand of my influence with the court. Besides, you have my word of honor——”

“The same word of honor,” exclaimed Marion, interrupting him, with flashing eyes, “that you gave to poor dead Clementine——”

“Dead!” repeated the Honorable lover, starting. Then a look of vindictive satisfaction appeared in his dark face.

“Dead, by your hand!” cried Marion, excitedly.



“The same word of honor,” she continued, “with which you will pledge the innocence of these unfortunate prisoners, if I bribe you to do it; the word of honor that you will tender to prove their guilt, if I refuse; the honor which skulked and listened to betray honorable enemies using allowable means to secure their freedom; the honor which would compel a woman to marry you through her love for another. I place no reliance upon such honor, sir. I know very well that it will not prevent your using any means in your power to effect the sacrifice of the unfortunate gentlemen who have been placed in their present unhappy position through your cowardly officiousness. But, as I have told you before, I will save them without your help, and in spite of you.”

“Calm yourself, Miss Marion,” said the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, “and think dispassionately of the consequences, before you refuse to accept my proposition.”

“I have considered sufficiently,” replied the persecuted girl, “and have given you my answer. I am sure that the gentlemen to whom you have particularly alluded would rather die a hundred deaths than be saved by such an act as that which you propose.”

“This is your final answer?” asked the Honorable Pestyfog, while his face assumed an expression more than usually sinister.

Marion thought a moment before she replied. It occurred to her that an occasion might possibly arise in which Colonel Clappergong’s services could be used without compromising herself, and that it would be impolitic, under the circumstances, to throw away this chance.

“I cannot tell to what straits despair of all other means might compel me,” she said, at length, in answer to his question. “But, for the present, I cannot come to your terms. I



shall first see what I can do myself, and I tell you so frankly. If I should fail, and no hope be left me save in your help, I will not now say what I might do. At this time I desire to be alone, and cannot well discuss any question."

"I shall take my leave, convinced that you will yet recall me. And let it be before the decision of the court is rendered, otherwise you will ask too late. I shall be sustained and encouraged, in the mean time, by the hope which you have now given me, confident that I shall not have long to wait."

And, saying this, the Honorable gentleman withdrew, burning with pent-up rage, yet counting upon final success, resolved as he was that Marion should be driven to despair of all other succor, and consent to buy his aid for her friends at the price which he had named.

Since Marion had told him that Clementine was dead, he had felt a nervous anxiety to reach the cottage where he had last seen that unfortunate girl, to join the mourners, utter protestations of woe, display a heart-breaking grief, talk of his torn affections, thus cruelly disappointed, as he was, of a wife, and of such a wife,—without equal,—and thus beguile the sorrowful friends of the deceased, and especially her brother, should he be there, in order to watch for, or make, an opportunity and secure the paper of which he had so much reason to dread the discovery by others. He should bind himself to no engagement, and in no wise limit his freedom by proclaiming, now, that he had been pledged to, and was about to marry, the unhappy Clementine; therefore he could see no objection to the course which he wished to follow. But, much as he desired to pursue this plan at once, he was constrained to defer its execution for awhile. To-morrow would not be too late to carry it into effect. For the present he



could not leave the more urgent business which he had in hand.

Marion's trouble and solicitude were much increased by this last interview with the Honorable Pestyfog. She now well knew that all this man's power would be used against the prisoners, in order to reduce her to the dreadful alternative of sacrificing herself or Allerton. She sank upon a chair and covered her face with her hands the moment the Honorable Mr. Clapperpong had disappeared. But she could not remain still. She arose, walked the floor with unequal steps, pressed her hands to her temples, clasped them upon her bosom, lifted them towards heaven; while from her lips came a supplication for help, like the unconscious moaning of a person in extreme pain. She heard footsteps, and then a knock at her door, which was opened ere she could answer the summons, and, turning, she saw Trangolar standing before her.

"Has it arrived?" she asked, eagerly, approaching him.

"Yes," he answered. "It is as I suppose."

"Tell me,—tell me all!" she urged, excitedly.

"The general directs a court-martial to sit without delay," said Trangolar, gravely.

"Well,—and then?" still urged Marion.

"And, if found guilty, that the prisoners be executed at once," he continued.

Marion winced as if she had received a blow, and staggered to a seat, where she sat for a few moments as though stupefied. Trangolar regarded her in silence, with a look of deep commiseration.

"But is he,—is my father not coming here himself?" she asked, presently, arousing herself with an effort.

"He says nothing about it in the dispatch," answered Trangolar. "I am, however, as you know, awaiting him here, by his orders."



“Then I must go to him immediately,” said she, nervously. “Will you go with me, Captain Trangolar?”

“I would certainly go with you, and with the greatest alacrity, if I could, Miss Marion,” he replied; “all the more because it is a wild time to be riding, and you will have to pass near the enemy’s lines. But I cannot. My orders are such that I must not go far away. If you will be advised by me, dear Miss Marion, do not undertake this journey. Wait for your father here.”

“Oh, I cannot, I cannot! It would be too late. Cass can go with me, and a woman may travel alone anywhere in this country and be safe,” answered Marion, already moving towards the door.

“But you may fall into the hands of some of the enemy’s scouting-parties,” argued Trangolar, trying to dissuade her. “We know that they are in the neighborhood, but not yet exactly where.”

“I do not fear them,” she replied. “They would let me go again when they knew my errand. I only fear loss of time and that I shall arrive too late.” And, going out, she summoned Cass, who was waiting near by, and directed him to bring up their horses.

The distance which she would have to traverse was such that, by hard riding, she could go and come back in a few hours; and Trangolar assured her that, if hindered by no accident, she would be able to return before the court, which was not yet organized, could conclude its deliberations.

Mounting her horse, she rode swiftly away, followed by Cass.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### ENTOILED.

THE fort at which Allerton and Bulldon were confined was situated near a small village, where was a tavern, the favorite resort of the Honorable Mr. Clappergong when in that part of the country, where he passed for a person of great distinction. At this tavern the Sisters Mary and Marguerite had stopped, but as yet the Honorable Pestyfog was ignorant of the fact. Marion, wishing to avoid notice as much as possible, had gone to the house of an humble friend, to whom she had often rendered important services. But the Sisters preferred to stay where they should be most likely to receive immediate information of all that was going on. The house in which Marion rested was on the border of the village, some distance from the tavern, and the most direct way from one to the other passed near the fort.

As the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, after leaving Miss Devray, walked towards the inn, the thought struck him that she might have communicated, or attempted to communicate, with the prisoners. The jealousy of rivalry, rather than that of love, quickened his suspicions, and he determined to find out if they were correct. With this purpose he turned aside to the fort and asked if any one had been there to see or bring any message to the accused. In reply, he was told that two Sisters of Charity had called with an open letter, which was addressed and had been delivered to one of the prisoners. On hearing this, the Honorable gentleman's mind turned at once to



the scene in which he had played a part at Clementine's cottage the preceding night. He could not distinctly remember all that had occurred, nor what he had said; for he had been too much excited by strong drink and evil passions to have a clear recollection of what took place. He did know, however, and the knowledge had haunted him like a spectre, that two Sisters of Charity had suddenly appeared from an inner room, where it was most probable they had overheard everything that was spoken by him. His apprehensions on this account stirred his imagination, and in the very dimness of his memory what had actually been said and done was magnified to frightful proportions; and he was tormented by what seemed to him a certainty that he had uttered in a loud voice all which he might have said, and, if so, that not only would the testimony of the Sisters be very powerful to aid in acquitting the prisoners, but also in convicting him of such practices as must be fatal to the success of all his schemes, even if his life were not also put in danger. He felt assured that the two Sisters who had been at the fort were those to whom he had involuntarily, as he believed, exposed his real purposes and character. He must, therefore, at once take measures to thwart any efforts which they might make in favor of the accused, and, as a necessary consequence, against himself. He readily conceived a plan to accomplish this end. Nothing could be learned at the fort concerning them except the fact that they had been there, and, after leaving the letter and respectfully but earnestly making the request that it be delivered, had quietly gone away. To the astonishment of the officer on duty, the Honorable Mr. Clappergong announced to him that these two women were, in all probability, spies; in fact, that this probability was sustained by the strongest circumstantial evidence, and that a secret understanding,



doubtless, existed between them and the prisoners; that it was of the utmost importance to prevent any further communication between the accused and these suspected persons; that every means should be used to arrest the women, and that they should be kept in close custody till after the trial of the officers, when their own examination could take place.

This information, backed by the Honorable Pestyfog's suggestions and plausible arguments, was reported to the commander of the post, who at once gave the necessary orders, and prepared to follow the course pointed out by the sagacious, earnest, and distinguished patriot.

Having discharged this duty, the Honorable gentleman continued his way towards the tavern.

Now, it happened that the Sisters Mary and Marguerite, after some time spent in commiserating the prisoners, had begun to cast about in their minds to see if some way of helping them could not be found.

"Do you know," said Sister Marguerite, "that I think the terrible man who treated poor Clementine so frightfully last night has had something to do with this dreadful accusation?"

"Why so?" asked Sister Mary.

"Do you not remember what he said?" questioned Sister Marguerite in reply.

"He said so many horrible things," observed Sister Mary.

"But I recollect distinctly one sentence which he uttered about a spy," said Sister Marguerite.

"I cannot call it to mind. What was it?" returned Sister Mary.

"He said, 'I am going to catch a spy to-night,—a spy who does not know himself that he is one,—and that will be doing the State some service. At any rate, the



fools who believe themselves the State will think so. I made a spy of him myself on purpose to catch him.' I think those were the very words. The sense, at least, is the same; I am sure of it," replied Sister Marguerite.

"Ah, I do remember now!" said Sister Mary.

"And these poor fellows were captured last night, it appears. If we could only show that his remark was in relation to them," continued Sister Marguerite.

"Perhaps your brother, Captain Trangolar, could help us. Why not send for him and ask his advice?" suggested Sister Mary.

"I do not know where to send now," replied Sister Marguerite. "He said he was going to take a look at the outposts, and should not be back for an hour or two."

Just at this moment they heard a voice, which seemed not altogether unknown to them, declaiming in front of the inn. Impelled by curiosity to know who was speaking, they approached the window, and saw the Honorable Mr. Clappergong standing, with his face towards them, talking oracularly to a number of persons, his constituents and followers, who were listening with every sign of admiration and approval. The Honorable gentleman looked up and instantly recognized the two women. Stopping abruptly in his discourse, he turned and walked rapidly away. In a few minutes he was at the fort; and, in as many more, an officer, with a squad of soldiers, appeared at the tavern and took the Sisters into custody. Vainly did they plead their innocence. The letters and papers which might have confirmed their statements and proved their safeguard had been left, with the little luggage which they had brought, at the headquarters, when they set out afoot on their errand of mercy, in the belief that they should have no further need of them. In vain Sister Marguerite asserted that Captain Trangolar was her brother.



The officer replied that if Captain Trangolar would corroborate what they said and vouch for their good faith his word would be sufficient, doubtless, to secure their unconditional release; but that until he should return, or until their innocence should otherwise appear, they must submit to be detained as prisoners. He was very sorry to be disobliging, but only discharged his duty in obedience to orders. And the two women were escorted, under guard, to the fort, and shut up in a small but comfortable room.

At first the Sisters were comforted by the belief that Marguerite's brother would soon return, and come to their relief. But as time passed, and he did not appear, their impatience and anxiety increased till it became agonizing.

It was not for want of inclination that Captain Trangolar did not arrive. Going to inspect the outposts, as was his intention when he left Sister Marguerite, he continued his course till, either from ignorance of the position of the hostile forces, or actuated by an imprudent spirit of adventure, he crossed a ravine, the slopes and bottom of which were thickly covered with small trees and bushes. No sooner had he emerged from the brush on the farther side than a low but distinct and determined voice ordered him to halt and surrender, while half a dozen muskets were pointed at him from the bushy cover. There was no doubt of the fact that he had fallen into the power of an advanced picket of the enemy. No choice was left the unlucky captain but to yield himself a prisoner, and find such consolation as he could in cursing alternately his ill luck and his foolhardiness, as he was taken in charge of two soldiers to the enemy's advance-guard.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

## MAKING READY.

THE case of Allerton and Bulldon was certainly desperate. Fortune seemed in every way opposed to them.

Miss Mabie, whose testimony might possibly have opened a way for their escape, had, as is known, stayed at the cottage to feed her morbid curiosity and gossip with the neighbors of her own sex, who had come to proffer aid to the family and prepare poor Clementine for her last resting-place, of the sad event, and all the circumstances connected with it, known or guessed. There the spinster heard, for the first time, the rumors and conjectures which coupled the unfortunate girl's name with that of the Honorable Mr. Clappergong.

Marion and Cass, each of whom could have imparted valuable information, were going farther and farther from the place of trial.

The Sisters Mary and Marguerite, whose evidence might have been very important, were under arrest, closely guarded, and forbidden all communication with the accused officers.

Captain Trangolar, who could have been the means of setting his sister and her companion at liberty, and of thus putting them in the way of giving a clue to the discovery of much weighty evidence for the prisoners, was himself a captive, in entire ignorance that his capture was likely to be avenged by the death of two persons belonging to the ranks of his captors, whose lives might have been saved but for his detention.



The accused were cognizant of none of these facts. They knew no person within reach to whom they could apply for friendly aid or advice. They were ignorant of any facts which might be proved in their favor. They had no knowledge of Marion's interest in them, and of her efforts to rescue them from their impending fate. They had not seen Cass since he left them in the forest after committing them to the care of Cicero. They were not aware that Miss Mabie could make disclosures which must, at least, throw great doubt upon the question of their guilt. The Honorable Mr. Clappergong's visit and avowal to poor Clementine were wholly unknown to them. They could perceive no means of breaking the circle of circumstantial evidence completed around them, and they had no hope of escaping the consequences of such evidence at the approaching trial. They knew the solemnity of their situation. They felt that their hours were numbered, and that before the setting of the sun they should be reckoned no more with the living. For they were certain that their trial would be short, and the execution of their sentence speedy.

Like brave men, accustomed to look upon sudden death as a matter of course, they calmly made ready to meet it. The guard kindly obtained some paper for them, and they wrote, each, a few letters, to be sent to their respective destinations after the execution. One of Allerton's letters was addressed to Marion. Here is a copy of it :

“I know, dear Miss Marion, that you will not be angry if, in these last hours of a life which has now no charm, I address you with terms of endearment, for you are still very, very dear to me. The loss of your love has in no way diminished my affection, and I feel as if my heart must break if I shut within it all its throbbing passion and attempt to write this short farewell and prayer for



pardon in cold, formal language. You are, and to the last moment of my life must be, my darling, the dearest and only beloved of my soul. Immortal as that soul is my love for you, I think, and cannot cease at my death. Could I have lived, I should have hoped to vindicate my conduct in your eyes. Dying, the sharpest agony will be caused by the ever-present consciousness that you condemn me. In asking you to forgive the deception which I practiced, I can only plead the overpowering temptation of your love. I could not resist it, dearest. It suffused all my being, it enveloped me, it held me spell-bound, obedient only to itself. I was so happy, so blessed. I had not the moral courage to put an end to the entrancing dream. I still hoped that something might occur which would make your pardon possible. I dared to look for lenity from you; that at length I might trust your love to plead for me; that you would come to see in me only the man, the lover, the devoted friend, and not the political enemy. That was my dream, that my hope; this all my excuse. I know before the trial that the evidence will be conclusive against me. I resign myself to my fate as well as I can, all the more easily now that, by my own act, I have put you forever beyond my reach. And yet, though I know this, I stretch out my arms to you and my heart yearns towards you in agony.

“I am entirely innocent of any purpose, even, to do the things laid to my charge. I pray you believe these, almost the last, words of a dying man. I did wish to escape from captivity, and, for this end, put on a disguise and ventured to ask hospitality at your house. When I was well enough to depart, I could not leave the paradise which your presence had conferred. I lingered with the vain hope of making that paradise real and perpetual. Yet did I always long to tell you all the truth, to open my



heart to you, so that you might read it as does the Omniscient. But prudence, fear of the effect which such a revelation might produce, what I owed to my friend,—for the secret and the danger were not mine alone,—made me defer the confession to the last.

“This letter is becoming too long. It is so sweet to feel that I am talking to you, with nothing now to conceal, while you are listening to me kindly, as I dare to believe, that I know not how to stop. You will credit the assertion of my innocence. Perhaps some day the plot which, I am sure, was formed against me, may come to light. Then the proofs of what I say will appear. Oh, darling, darling! I could go to my death with a light heart did I know that you believe me guiltless and have forgiven me. That will be known to me only when we shall meet hereafter. But I feel assured that you will, some time, remember me with tenderness and sorrow.

“Good-by, my only love. May the good Father of all bless you for ever and ever! Farewell, my darling, my life! Although my arms cannot find you, nor my eyes see you, I feel that you are near, and that this, and not that cruel one when last you saw me, is our final separation. With it the sharpness of death is past.

“Your own, even into and through the dark valley,  
“ALLERTON.

“P.S.—Notwithstanding his wound and his feebleness, my friend teaches me to be strong. He bids me tell you how gratefully he remembers all your kindness, and to say farewell to you for him.

“ALLERTON.”

Bulldon wrote to his mother as follows:



“MY DARLING MOTHER,—I know not where you are, but believe you near me; yet not so near that I may see you before I die. Ere you shall have read this letter, you will have learned of my end. I suffer an ignominious death unjustly. I say this, not to complain, but for your comfort. I shall not blame our judges; since the proofs on which they must act will be seemingly decisive. We are the victims of treachery and malice. The thought of doing that of which we are accused never entered my mind. And I know that my companion is as innocent as myself. But we are helpless, and can only meet our fate like men. Do not think me too much of a baby, dear mother, if I tell you, hurt and enfeebled and sorrowful as I am,—for it is hard to die just now that I have received your last letter,—how I long to have you by me, to rest my head again on your bosom, and feel the soothing influences of your love and sympathy, and the gentle caresses of your dear hands, charming all pain from my bruised and aching head. Allerton has read your two letters to me, for I could not read them myself, and I have wept over your sorrows. Forgive you, dearest mother! I pity you from the bottom of my heart, and love you more than ever. I never thought that you could need or ask my forgiveness. But I know that I must have, and was constantly receiving, yours. Yet I never imagined how much you have suffered for me; and now you must endure the hardest pang of all. Would to Heaven I could spare you this! But I cannot. It has been so willed by a Power that is all-wise as well as omnipotent. My heart is melted with pity and love for you, my good, my angelic mother. When you hear the story of my death, you shall not blush for me. The Sister Mary, of whom you speak, and to whom you confided your last letter, has not been to see me, has not even asked to see me. I cannot but feel that she has treated



me with cruel negligence; since she could have talked to me of you, and received my last sorrowful messages. Believe me, darling mother, I think not of myself, but my heart is ready to break with sympathy for you. In this trying hour I remember all your dear instructions, and they are a source of sweet consolation. They point me to the hope of a happy meeting with you where there shall be no separation. But I cannot write more. I was wounded when we were captured, and am still weak. I trust my strength will suffice to carry me manfully through all that is to come.

“Farewell, my dear, patient, suffering mother. God bless and comfort you under this last and greatest affliction!—greatest it must be, for I know how you love me. I die, as I have tried to live, an honorable man. Let this assurance soften your grief.

“Your devoted son,

“EDWARD.”

To the lady whom he so dearly loved, Bulldon wrote:

“Through malice or mistake, I am about to suffer a disgraceful death. I die an honest man, without the stain of a dishonorable thought, as I fondly trust. In this solemn hour all petty feelings are hushed. I acknowledge the possibility that, in leaving you so abruptly, without asking or giving you opportunity for any explanation, I may have done you great wrong. If so, I entreat your forgiveness. I will not speak of what I have suffered. You can divine it when I say that I have never ceased to love you with all the ardor of a first and only love. That you will forgive all my injustice, and remember me with kindness, as one whose faults shall have been expiated before you read this letter, is the last petition of your ever-loving

“EDWARD.”



Allerton, for himself and his friend, wrote out some directions for the delivery of these and other letters after their death, and also their respective wishes in regard to the disposition that should be made of certain keepsakes. The miniature of Bulldon's mother, and her two letters, one of which had already been so long and so sacredly preserved by him, were sealed up in a little package, to be sent to her, or delivered to Sister Mary for her.

Little was said by the two friends while making these sad preparations. The thoughts and feelings called into action were too deep and too sacred for expression. Unbidden tears would occasionally steal from their eyes as memory was busy with the past.

These pious and touching acts were hardly finished when an officer entered and summoned them to appear before the court; and, closely guarded, they proceeded to the place of trial. Bulldon walked between Allerton and a soldier, leaning on an arm of each.



## CHAPTER XXX.

## FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

MARION'S strength and skill as a rider stood her well in hand as her spirited steed rushed furiously on, irritated almost to madness by inconsiderate urging. Her beautiful brows were slightly drawn together; her usually soft eyes, hardened by the ardor of resolution, looked straight before her; and her whole expression betokened an unconquerable purpose. She seemed unconscious that the pet horse beneath her could feel pain or be susceptible of fatigue, as, from time to time, she brought her whip smartly down upon his flecked shoulders or streaming flanks. Yet the noble beast, sympathizing, apparently, with his rider's intense excitement, was willingly showing his fastest pace. Cass's whole attention was taken up in trying to keep near to his mistress. Had they been less absorbed when they swept by a cluster of trees standing near the road, they might have seen two soldiers, who came out hastily and leveled their muskets, which were immediately thrown up by the officer in command. He probably saw that the riders could not be stopped without firing upon them, and he would not permit his men to shoot at a woman. Ignorant of the danger which they had escaped, mistress and man rode on at headlong speed, and at length reached the town where Marion expected to find her father. They could not but notice that the place was in a state of unusual commotion. General officers and aides-de-camp were riding fast hither and thither; the heavy rumble of



moving artillery sounded like the reverberations of distant thunder; drums were beating; and regiments of infantry and cavalry were marching, or drawn up waiting the order to march. With flushed face, Marion drew rein near an officer who was quietly sitting on his horse at the head of one of the regiments which had halted. Her voice was broken by the tumultuous beating of her heart, as she asked the way to headquarters. The officer courteously directed her to a house not far off; and, hastily thanking him, she rode on. When they came to this house, Cass pushed his horse forward and took her bridle, just as she leaped, unaided, to the ground. Going directly to the sentinel on duty, she asked to see General Devray. The soldier replied that the general was very busy and could see no one.

“But I am his daughter,” she cried, “and I must see him!”

The man raised his cap respectfully, and, calling an orderly, who was standing near the door, told him who the young lady was and what she wanted. The orderly, after regarding her for a moment with a look in which admiration, respect, and curiosity were blended, went into the house. Coming back soon, he asked Marion to follow him, and going before her through a hall, in which were many aides-de-camp and other inferior officers, he opened the door of a large room, which she entered. Heedless of several military personages of high rank, some of whom were standing near General Devray, some lounging on the window-sills, and some engaged in conversation which was carried on in a low voice a little to one side, she hurried up to her father, who was seated at a table, and said, as he arose to embrace her,—

“Oh, papa, I must see you right away; there is not a moment to lose!”



Looking at her with an expression of tender surprise, General Devray led the way to another room. As soon as the door was closed and they were alone, Marion threw her arms about her father's neck, and, hiding her face in his bosom, sobbed convulsively.

"What has happened, my child?" demanded he, affectionately, caressing her head soothingly with his hand. After a few moments he raised her from his breast, and, kissing her forehead, asked, "What has brought you here, my darling, at such a time as this?"

"Oh, papa!" she answered, "those poor officers whom they call spies,—they are not spies, papa, I am sure they are not; and they will condemn them, and execute them, unless you stop them, papa."

"But, my child," said her father, "what do you know about it?"

"I know that they are not spies, dear papa," she replied. And, once more hiding her face on her father's breast, she added, "The colonel loves me, and I love him, and I know he could not do such a thing——"

"What are you saying, Marion?" interrupted the general, gravely, again raising his daughter's head, and holding her blushing and tearful face at arm's length from him, while he looked sharply at her. As she stood thus, her beauty was such as must have touched any heart, much more a father's. Her face was tinted like an exquisite rose-leaf by the rich blood that mantled it; tears glistened in all their purity on either cheek; her eyes were cast down, and all the soft luxuriance of her long and dark eyelashes was visible; her hair, broken partially from its bonds by the violent motion of her ride, hung in graceful confusion about her neck, and lay in affluent masses on her shoulders.

"Do not be angry with me, dear papa," she said; "you will find that I am right." And again she twined her



arms about his neck. "It is a long story, and there is not time to tell it now; for, if we delay, I shall be too late. Besides, I have proofs; and there must be more, if we only had time to discover them."

"What proofs?" asked the general, looking troubled and sorely perplexed. And then he continued: "But I have not time to listen to them now. The court-martial will give those gentlemen a fair trial."

"No, but it cannot, papa. They have no evidence to offer for themselves. I have it, or I can find it, if you will give me time."

Then, suddenly drawing out her purse, she took from it the stone which she had bought of the soldier, as has been related, and told her father how she came by it, and what the man had said. Looking around, as if she feared to be overheard, she put her mouth to her father's ear, and said something in a whisper. The general started with unfeigned surprise. He took the stone and examined it carefully for a moment. Then he spoke:

"I cannot give you more time now, my child. It is impossible. All I can do is to send an order that all proceedings against these men be suspended till I arrive. And this I will do. After I come, they shall have every opportunity and facility for clearing themselves, and you can tell me your story. I sincerely trust, my dear," he added, gravely, but tenderly, "that you have been guilty of no conduct unbecoming my daughter?"

"You shall judge for yourself, papa, my dear, good papa," said she, looking him frankly in the face; "and be sure that I will do nothing against your wishes after you shall know all. But let me have the order at once; let me carry it, papa."

"That would be folly,—worse than folly, child," replied the general. "You are already overheated and tired



with hard riding ; besides, we are in hourly expectation of an attack. The enemy has advanced his whole line, and you might be intercepted and taken prisoner, if no worse happened to you."

"Oh, they certainly would not harm a woman," said Marion ; "and your order would itself be a safe-conduct, if shown."

"There is some reason in that," observed her father.

"And, moreover, I cannot remain here," argued Marion.

"That is true enough," said the general, thoughtfully. And then, after a short pause, he continued : "Perhaps you are right, my brave girl. You shall bear the order ; but I will send a troop of horse to escort you."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, papa !" said Marion, embracing him. "Write the order at once, please. Cass is here with the horses, and they have had time to breathe."

Without making any reply, her father led the way to the room where he was when she came in, and, seating himself at the table, wrote the order and gave it to Marion. Then, calling an officer, he directed him to take a company of cavalry and escort Miss Devray to Fort —, charging him, on her account, to use all caution, run no risks, and move as fast as possible. Then he embraced his daughter fondly, and, with a fervent "God bless you, my darling !" turned from her and once more took his seat at the table.

The young officer who was to command the escort offered his arm, cap in hand, to Miss Devray, and conducted her to the piazza in front of the house, where he placed a seat, and, begging her to wait a few minutes till the troop should be ready to start, left her. In a very short time he appeared at the head of his horsemen, and, dismounting, placed Marion in her saddle. Then, leap-



ing on his horse and taking his position by her side, they went before the company at a brisk trot out of the town, while Cass followed in the rear of the cavalcade.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### WHO WERE BEHIND THE WOOD.

As soon as they were beyond the press and confusion of the crowded streets, a portion of the escort was placed before Marion and the captain, to act as an advance-guard, and the party quickened their pace to a gallop.

Instead of following the more direct road by which she had come, they turned into another, which, although it made the journey somewhat longer, would carry them farther from the enemy's lines. The captain, who yet rode by Marion, civilly tried to engage her in conversation, but she seemed disinclined to talk. From time to time she would feverishly urge on her steed, or ask her companion if they could not go faster, notwithstanding the speed of their horses was already well put to the test. Sometimes, too, she would press her hand to her side, to still the sharp pain caused by long-continued violent exercise and fatigue. But she uttered no word of complaint.

They had ridden, without accident or incident, about one-half the way which they had to go, when they came abreast a wood, which bordered the road for half a mile or more, and from which it was separated by a low fence. As they drew near to this wood, the lieutenant, who commanded the advance-guard, had looked closely into it,



but, seeing no signs of the enemy, he had dashed onward, followed by the whole party. They had passed over about one-half that portion of the road which was skirted by the grove, when they saw a body of cavalry suddenly come from beyond the trees, leap the fence, and draw up in the track to dispute their passage. The captain at once ordered a halt. Casting his eyes back, as if about to order a retreat, he saw that another body of horsemen had as suddenly appeared at the other end of the wood in their rear. It was plain that a regiment of the enemy's troopers had been hidden behind the trees, and, as soon as Marion's escort had passed the outskirts of the grove, had been divided into two bands to intercept the party and prevent its advance or retreat. Each of these bands largely outnumbered that which formed Marion's guard. The young officer, who had not before quitted Miss Devray's side, held a hasty consultation with his subordinates. There was, however, little time for deliberation. The troop in the rear was already coming on to the charge.

"Shall we surrender?" asked the captain of Marion, as he returned to her.

"Not if you can help it," she answered, calmly; but her face was very pale. This reply seemed to agree with the captain's wishes. He at once decided to attack, and, if possible, break through the force in front before that in the rear could come up, and was forming a portion of his company in a hollow square for the better protection of the lady, when she turned her horse towards him and addressed him:

"They will not trouble themselves about a woman," she said. "I will leave the highway for awhile, and ride through the wood and through the fields till I can again take the road safely, when you can join me, if you succeed in passing the enemy. If you do not prosper in this un-



dertaking, I shall still be able to do my errand. While you engage our opponents, I shall, at any rate, have time to escape."

Without waiting for a reply, she put her horse over the fence and disappeared among the trees, followed by Cass, who, on the first appearance of danger, had ridden forward and stationed himself near his mistress.

This movement was seen by the force in the rear, and half a dozen troopers, headed by a lieutenant, instantly broke from the ranks and started in pursuit. Over the fence they went pell-mell, crashing through the woods in the direction taken by Marion.

In the mean time the captain of the escort had ordered the charge, and his men dashed gallantly after him against those who barred their progress. The shock was firmly sustained by the adversary, and a number of soldiers on each side were killed at the onset. But the contest, unequal at first, soon became overwhelmingly so, for the troop in the rear reached the scene of the fight, and the brave fellows who wished to force their way, pressed upon now before and behind, had no choice but to surrender, or uselessly to throw away their lives. At least one-half their number lay upon the road, dead, or grievously wounded, when the survivors yielded themselves prisoners, and, under a strong guard, took up their march to the enemy's camp.

For awhile Marion did not know that she was followed. The rustle and snapping of dry leaves and underbrush as her own and Cass's horses galloped through the wood, which, fortunately for them, was not encumbered with thickets, prevented their hearing the noise made by their pursuers. But, shortly after they had come out into the open country, they distinctly heard the tramp of steeds behind them, and soon saw the troopers riding hard after



them. Divining their purpose, Marion used her whip vigorously; but her noble horse could not increase his speed. He was far from fresh. He had done his whole duty faithfully, and now, thoroughly exhausted, breathed loud and with difficulty through his widely-distended and quivering nostrils. His mistress seemed not to notice his distress, but urged him continually. Cass had already fallen somewhat in the rear, unable to force his horse to the pace necessary in order to keep near his leader. Those who followed them, on the contrary, appeared to be well mounted on fresh and swift horses, particularly the commander of the party and one of his men, who led the hunt. Under these conditions the result of the chase could not long remain doubtful.

Seeing that there was no hope of escape, and that further efforts would be vain, Marion stopped her horse, and, turning him so as to face her pursuers, waited for them. The poor beast stood with his head drooping almost to the ground, and trembling in every limb. Cass soon joined his mistress, and, shortly after, the officer who led the hostile party came up, followed by his men, one after another.

"You are a gallant rider, miss," said the lieutenant, "but the chances were against you this time. I must request you and your servant here to go with us."

"Do you make war on women, then?" asked Marion, the scorn of her expression hardly concealed by the haughtiness of her manner.

"No, but we take them captive sometimes, in revenge for the many surrenders which they compel from us," answered the officer, raising his cap. "You will, therefore, please to consider yourself my prisoner," he added.

"But, sir," she said, forgetting all her indignation,



“you do not know my errand. You surely will not detain me when you know that.”

“I am afraid it will make no difference,” he replied.

“Oh, it must! it must!” said she, earnestly. “Two of your officers, Colonel Allerton and Captain Bulldon, are prisoners at Fort —, accused of being spies, to be tried this very day, with no testimony as yet to offer against the complete circumstantial evidence of their guilt. I have been to my father, and got an order to put off their trial. Here it is.” And, with trembling hands, she drew the order from her bosom and handed it to the lieutenant.

“I beg your pardon, miss,” said the officer, as he gave the order back, after reading it carefully, “but are you the daughter of General Devray?”

“Yes, sir,” she answered.

“Permit me to remark that you have good reason to be proud of each other,” said he, respectfully. And then he added, “But I cannot let you pass, miss. I have no discretion in the matter. And if I had, I could not act differently. I know the officers of whom you speak, and two more gallant or honorable gentlemen do not live. But they must submit to the chances of war. It is better that they should die than that we should be made to sacrifice some thousands of men, and perhaps even then to fail, by letting you carry to the fort the news of our approach. Besides, I cannot be certain that the order which you have is not part of a plan to pass you safely on your way to give the very information which we wish to keep to ourselves.”

“I assure you,” replied Marion, warmly, “that I have only spoken the truth. I have but one purpose, and that is to bear this order as quickly as possible——”

“But why such interest in these officers?” asked the lieutenant, interrupting her.



"They—they are my friends," she replied, casting down her eyes.

Her evident confusion, as she made this answer, increased the officer's suspicions that the order and the story of the accusation against his two friends were but pretexts.

"I know nothing of your movements, and could not injure you if I would," said Marion, after a short pause.

"It may be a hard case," observed the officer, almost sadly, "but, as I said before, I have no discretion, and must take you to my commanding officer. He may do as he pleases."

Without further delay, he formed his men, and, laying his hand on Marion's bridle, gave the order to march. The party moved at a slow trot towards the place where the pursuit had begun.

Marion went, wringing her hands, and moaning in all the sharp agony of despair.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP.

IN the face of so much adverse fortune, Marion's fortitude seemed at length to have given way, and she rode hopelessly, and almost helplessly, along, apparently unmindful of the lieutenant's respectful attempts to comfort her by assurances that she should receive only the most courteous treatment, so far as could be consistent with the necessity for her detention.

He, naturally enough, supposed that her grief was caused



by fears for her personal safety. She appeared like a person so worn with illness that the mind had lost its power to mark passing events, and the senses their readiness to give notice of them. Once or twice she would have fallen from her horse had not the officer, who never left her side, supported her.

They came, by-and-by, to the scene of the conflict between her former escort and the enemy's troopers, plainly denoted by the torn ground, and by the dead bodies of friend and foe stiffening in all the ghastly contortions into which they had been thrown by the last mortal agony. Marion shuddered as they passed the spot, and covered her face with her hands.

They continued their course to the headquarters of the expedition to which her captors belonged. These were, for the time being, in a farm-house, of which the soldiers had taken possession. As they drew near this place, the unfortunate girl seemed to revive a little, and her natural hopefulness and elasticity of spirit appeared to struggle against the depressing influences by which she was almost crushed.

The officer, in whose care she was, lifted her from the saddle, and requested the women of the house, who yet remained on the premises, to give her all needful attention. Then he went to General Sterling, the officer commanding the force, and told him what he had done. Luckily, this gentleman had formerly known and highly esteemed General Devray as his friend, had visited at his house, and had often seen Marion while she was yet a child. He listened to the lieutenant's statement with the liveliest interest.

"You have done right, sir," he said, when that officer had concluded his report; "but I wish to Heaven you had been less obedient! I would have taken her word to



divulge nothing, and allowed that girl to go on, though I had been court-martialed and cashiered for it. Where and how is she?"

"Quite broken down, sir, apparently. I left her in charge of the women here," replied the lieutenant.

The general went at once to see her. As soon as he appeared, Marion recognized him, and, coming eagerly towards him, seized his hand in both her own.

"Oh, sir," she cried, "do not keep me here! You know me. You know that what I say is true. They will be killed if you do not let me go. Here is the order, and it will save them if you do not hinder me." And, with eager hands, she drew the order from its sacred resting-place and gave it to the commander. He turned to read it, ashamed to let her see that he could not at first make out the words for the mists which dimmed his sight.

"I am exceedingly sorry, Miss Devray," said he, "that my men were so well mounted; although the officer who brought you in only did his duty. They all had positive orders to capture every person found going towards the fort. I am afraid it is now too late to mend what has been done."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Marion, while her sweet, pale face seemed to grow still paler. "If you will but give me a fresh horse,—mine, poor fellow, is quite worn out,—and let me go, I will yet be in time." And she added, as if speaking her thoughts, unconsciously, aloud, "I must be in time! I must save them! Oh, what shall I do?"

"My dear young lady," replied General Sterling, very gently, even tenderly, "you do not know what has taken place since you left the fort. Our advance should now be very near it, and all the avenues of approach cut off."

"But give me a pass, and I am sure I can find a way," urged she.



“That is impossible,” he answered. “The danger would be too great.”

“What shall I do, then? Oh, tell me what I shall do!” pleaded the poor girl.

“We will see what can be done,” said the general. “Something has been begun already. Let me say that I honor your efforts and sympathize with you more than I can express. I knew of the critical situation of our two friends. Captain Trangolar——”

“Captain Trangolar!” repeated Marion, interrupting, with a look of bewilderment.

“Captain Trangolar, who was once well known to me, told me all about their misfortunes.”

“Captain Trangolar told you this?” she asked, as if she could not comprehend.

“Yes. He was taken prisoner this morning by one of our pickets, and is now in camp. As soon as I received this sad news I hastened all our preparations for an attack, desiring to be in time, if possible, to save the lives of two of our bravest officers. It was our purpose to make this attack as much of a surprise as we could; which is the reason why you were so sharply pursued, captured, and detained. All travelers were treated in the same way. It was one of the necessities of the case,—one of the wrongs which war forces us to commit; and so you must pardon it. As I have said, our advance ought now to be near the fort; and we are to move from here immediately to its support. You shall go with us, and Captain Trangolar, who is on parole, shall be your particular escort. At the very first opportunity you shall be sent forward with a flag of truce; and I trust you may yet arrive in time.”

In his own mind the careful commander was very sure that such an opportunity would not occur till after the



sound of his guns should have announced that the attack had been made. He had the fullest confidence in Marion's honor ; but, in common with many other thoughtful and discreet men, he entertained the very absurd notion that women often tell a secret unconsciously, and without any design so to do ; that sometimes, even, it is betrayed by their ill-judged efforts to guard it ; that they are impulsive and excitable ; that, as a full jar, when shaken, spills enough of its contents to show what it holds, so they not seldom, when agitated or stirred, throw out sufficient to show what they could tell ; and that, in any case, they are apt to use language without apprehending all its significance or measuring its possible reach. Therefore, in spite of his kindly sympathy with Marion and those whom she wished to serve, he was not sorry, now that she was in his camp, that she could not go to her friends before they should have received his grim salute. Trangular had intimated to him that the young lady's heart had been given to Allerton ; and on this account his pity for her was all the more tender.

"Oh, thank you ! thank you !" was all the reply that Marion had made, between her sobs, as she caught eagerly at the remote hope thus held out.

"You deserve, and shall have, the honor of bearing that order to the fort yourself," said the commander. "But you will have no opportunity to serve our enemies by giving them news of us ; we shall be beforehand with you," added he, playfully.

Marion seemed not to notice the remark.

"Now," he continued, "try to rest a little for a few minutes ; and the good women here will give you some refreshments, while our troops are put in motion. Then we will set out together."

Thereupon General Sterling turned and left the room ;



and the women, seeing in how forlorn a condition the young lady appeared, were urgently kind in their attentions, offering such homely comfort and solace as they could. They persuaded her to drink some home-made cordial, which had great repute in the neighborhood for its tonic, stimulating, and health-giving properties. It was there esteemed a balm alike for the body and the soul; and Marion really felt much refreshed and invigorated by its cheering power.

Before many minutes had passed, Captain Trangolar came in to lead Miss Devray to the horse which had been provided for her by General Sterling, announcing that all was ready for their departure.

His presence was a great relief to her, and seemed to give her new strength.

In a short time they were on their way towards the fort, riding near the commanding officer and his staff, and followed by the faithful, yet weary, anxious, and half-distracted Cass, who was also mounted on a fresh horse, but to whom no one had explained the purpose of their present journey.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE TRIAL.

As soon as Allerton and Bulldon had entered the room where the court was assembled, and taken the seats provided for them, the trial began. The officer to whom they had surrendered themselves prisoners in the first place, and who happened now to be on duty with the garrison of the fort, was one of the witnesses, and by his testimony proved



who they were, and that they had been taken by him. Then the officer of his command who had been overcome and bound by them with his own connivance testified to the fact of their escape, and, under the inspiration of the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, appeared to be a model of bravery, patriotism, and fidelity. That they had borne assumed names, disguised themselves in the uniform and represented themselves as belonging to the party of their adversaries, stayed some time within their lines, and then essayed to fly to the enemy, bearing papers which they could not have obtained honestly, nor have hidden upon their persons save with a will to do the acts of spies, was easily proven by the Honorable Pestyfog, and others, who gave their evidence with much apparent alacrity. These facts, indeed, the prisoners did not attempt to deny. But they did solemnly assert that they were wholly ignorant of the existence, even, of the papers found upon them till they were taken from Allerton's boot; and that they were disguised for no dishonorable purpose, but only to make sure their flight, and rejoin their friends, like good men and true.

The only effect of these assertions, however, was to lower the accused in the respect, and diminish the already small favor, of the court. Such affirmations appeared too palpably, too stupidly false; to have not even the merit of ingenuity; to show an utter absence of common shrewdness, magnanimity, and chivalrous courage on the part of those who made them, when compared with the proven, even with the admitted, facts.

"I have nothing to say," spoke Bulldon, in a steady voice, when asked if he had any further defense to make, "except that we are the victims of a cunning scoundrel, who has contrived to give a false coloring to all that we have done knowingly, by making us do ignorantly that



which is most conclusive against us, and which cannot but confirm in your minds the belief in our guilt. We foresee the inevitable sentence of this court, and are prepared to meet it."

The speaker's fine face was very pale; yet it was, plainly, not the pallor of apprehension, but that consequent upon his wound. No trepidation or anxiety was apparent in his looks or in the tones of his voice.

Allerton was equally calm. Looking frankly at his judges, and speaking with great dignity and candor, he said,—

"Aware that the deliberations of this court can have but one result, and that we already stand here as condemned men, I must reiterate the statements which I have already made. And I should esteem myself most fortunate and happy if they could impress the honorable members of this court with the conviction that my companion in misfortune is innocent of the practices charged against him. You will remember that on my person only were any documents found. He, then, ought to be considered free from all the effects of that discovery. You may choose to disbelieve me when I say that even I myself am in no way responsible for that fact; that I was wholly ignorant of the existence of those papers till they were taken from their place of concealment, when we were captured. But you must believe me when, speaking not for myself but for another, I assert that he was not, and could not be, an accomplice in that act. I would to Heaven that I might impart to you my certainty of his freedom from any thought even of the deeds for which he stands accused! I know him to be the very soul of honor. And he has much to live for. Born of a noble race, life is full of promise for him. I entreat that you will so far give credit to our statements, made upon honor, and, as



it were, in the immediate presence of death, that you may be satisfied with my condemnation, and let my friend and comrade go free."

"Stop, Allerton. Speak for yourself, or sit down," said Bulldon, in a low voice, and for the first time showing agitation, as he pulled at his friend's skirts.

"I make this appeal," continued Allerton, "under the sanction of everything which men reverence or respect, and in circumstances of the greatest solemnity. It is for you to judge whether an appeal so made, by one who knows that which he affirms, and who pleads not for himself, be not worthy of consideration and credence. As for me, except the ignominy of it, my death does not matter much. Whether it come to-day or to-morrow, the difference is little."

The members of the court listened to these speeches with apparent interest. Some were evidently touched by Allerton's disinterestedness. Others suspected him of disingenuousness and hardihood; of having made a wily attempt to accomplish some underhanded scheme by obtaining the release of his accomplice. It is so much easier to suspect an evil than a good motive for what men do. Immediately after they had finished speaking, the prisoners were removed, that the court might consult.

The Honorable Mr. Clappergong had himself already gone, and had sent several times since Marion's departure, to learn if she had returned. He cherished the hope that she might at length have been driven by desperation to acquiesce in his wishes, and that she was ready to accept the terms of his proposition. He now hurried off again to see if she had yet come back, and to obtain her final answer. The irritation produced by her continued absence was one of the causes which made him give his testimony against the accused with such ill-concealed pleasure.



He felt that he was revenging himself on both Allerton and Marion for their obstinacy in refusing his generous offer and thwarting his cherished purpose. If he could conclude a treaty with the lady before the finding of the court should be promulgated, he was confident that he might dictate its decision.

When he learned that Marion had not yet returned, he could not restrain his rage, nor refrain from cursing violently. He saw that his last chance to win Miss Devray was gone; yet he experienced a feeling of exultation as he thought of her sufferings when she should find that, though successful in her errand, she had come too late, and that all her efforts had been useless. In this amiable frame of mind he returned to the fort.

The deliberations of the court had not been long. The prisoners were found guilty, and sentenced to be executed within an hour.

The only object of this short delay was to give time for the preparation of a rude scaffold.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### ISOLATED.

THE Sisters Mary and Marguerite were tortured by the sharpest pangs of apprehension. As they noted, with ever-growing impatience and solicitude, the passage of time, they became a prey to painful forebodings, both as to Captain Trangolar's fate and their own. But even greater were their fear and anxiety on account of the young officers who were undergoing an examination on which



their lives depended. In reply to urgent questions, the Sisters had been told by their guard that the trial had begun. Then for awhile did they forget their own critical situation and all their fears for Trangolar and themselves. Kneeling, they prayed that the accused might safely pass this crisis; that the omniscient Judge would mercifully incline the thoughts of those who were sitting in judgment to truth and justice. And if, in His infinite and inscrutable purposes, it was ordered that these brave men must suffer, they besought the Divine support for them in their last hour, that they might meet their fate with resignation, and with that tranquillity which is imparted by the belief that death is the last agony of the curse, and the portal by which men return to Paradise, whence they were once banished. Here the voices of the suppliants were broken by sobs, and their words became intelligible only to that ear which is always open.

Before their own arrest they had hoped to see the accused officers after their trial, even should they be condemned. Now they knew that, if these gentlemen were not acquitted, that hope was vain; unless, indeed, Trangolar should return very soon and themselves be set at liberty. The Honorable Mr. Clappergong, fearing the effect of such disclosures as the Sisters might make, or as might be drawn from them, if they should be brought face to face with the condemned, and wishing to use every precaution against such a chance, had argued that these women ought to be kept strictly confined, and not allowed to communicate with any one, particularly the officers awaiting execution, until Captain Trangolar should come back; nor then, unless, as they had alleged, he could prove them to be no spies, but peaceable persons acting in good faith; that this course would be really the kindest to the ladies, and subject them to the fewest annoyances, etc.



The Honorable gentleman had his own reasons for wishing to put off all action in regard to these prisoners and to keep them isolated till Captain Trangolar should again show himself. It had now become necessary to him, as a matter of prudence, that Allerton and Bulldon should be executed and his own conduct not be called in question. He was confident that the time, thus limited, would be enough for the accomplishment of his purposes. He felt very certain that this officer could not be back before the execution should take place. Not that he had any intimation or suspicion of what had, in fact, befallen the captain. But he knew that Trangolar had only come to the fort to meet General Devray. He knew, also, that the general had been detained; and he knew that Trangolar had received a message from his chief since he arrived at the post, and that shortly after he had gone away. He inferred, therefore, that the captain had been ordered to repair to General Devray's headquarters, and had set out in obedience to the summons, in which case it would be very unlikely that he could return in time to interfere with the Honorable Pestyfog's patriotic plans. He felt all the more confidence in the correctness of his inference as to the cause of Trangolar's prolonged absence, from the fact that, at the Sisters' tearful solicitation, messengers had been sent to every place in the neighborhood where he would be likely to stop, to ascertain if that officer had been seen, and had obtained no news of him. Wishing to appear wholly uninterested in the captain's movements, his absence or his presence, the Honorable Mr. Clapper-gong had refrained from asking any questions. Otherwise he might have learned that, instead of going to General Devray's headquarters, he had walked out simply to while away a little time in visiting some of the outposts near the fort. The Honorable gentleman's argu-



ments, in regard to the course of conduct proper to be followed in relation to the Sisters, prevailed ; so that, when Bulldon asked the guard whether a Sister of Charity had been there again, he was told that two women, dressed as Sisters of Charity, had been arrested as spies, and were now imprisoned in the fort ; and, in reply to Bulldon's inquiry whether he might not see them, the soldier informed him that orders had been given particularly forbidding any communication between those persons and themselves. So, also, when the Sisters, having heard of the sentence, and that it was so speedily to be executed, besought leave to see the condemned men and offer such religious consolations as it was the privilege of their order to administer, the permission was refused, and no amount of entreaty could prevail to obtain this favor.

They forbore to speak of any other interest which made them desire to see the doomed officers, for fear, through the general suspicion against them, of impairing rather than improving their chance. So long as death should not make such a meeting impossible, they would not despair of obtaining from the authorities the consent for which they so earnestly prayed. They waited and hoped, also, for Trangolar's return, in an agony of solicitude, during this brief hour, which fled away as if time had quadrupled his speed. But he came not ; and they learned that the preparations for the execution were complete.

Perceiving now that nothing could be lost by making known her most urgent motives for wishing to see the condemned men, and that in doing this lay her only remaining hope, small as that might be, Sister Mary hastily wrote a petition to the commander of the fort, entreating permission to see the unhappy young men before they should be led to the scaffold, and stating such reasons why her prayer should be granted as would, in all probability,



have prevailed with the strict but kind-hearted officer, had the petition been read by him. Unfortunately, however, he was very much occupied at the time, and, supposing the paper to contain a plea for the release of the two women, and thinking that an hour or two could not make much difference with them, he put the document into his pocket, to be examined when he should be more at leisure. Had he read it then, he would have learned facts which, coming to his knowledge a little later, in a different way, drew tears from his eyes.

In vain the Sisters waited for a response to this last appeal. The funeral music, which had torn their hearts as it reached them in their prison, died out of hearing. The final moments of the last hour of life accorded to the victims were passing away, and Sisters Mary and Marguerite felt that their mission could never be fulfilled.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A LUCKY SHOT.

THE scaffold had been set up at some distance from the fort, between it and the outposts, towards the enemy, on the highest part of a rising ground, from which an extensive view was afforded. From an innate love of pageantry, or in order to make the execution more impressive, a much larger body of soldiers than could, in any event, be requisite, was formed in a funeral procession, preceded by the fine military band at that time stationed at the post. The condemned men were brought out and placed in charge



of an especial guard, who were arranged before, behind, and on both sides of them, with muskets loaded and bayonets fixed. In making these unusual preparations some unexpected delay happened, so that the hour fixed for the execution was past before the procession was well on its way. When all was ready, the order to march was given. The muffled drums murmured softly a few bars, then ceased, and nothing was heard but the measured step of the soldiers. Again the drums muttered a lamentation, and were a second time hushed, and, for another space, only the relentless tread of the column marked the swift lapse of time. Once more the inarticulate drums gave forth a hoarse, tremulous, and long-drawn moan; and the wind-instruments, as if they could no longer keep silence, broke into the first wild and melancholy strains of a dirge, and complained through the whole diapason. Slowly moved the music, slowly and silently marched the men. For some time not a voice was heard. Soberly, but serenely, walked the unfortunate friends to an inglorious death, cheered by no shouts, excited by no passions, stimulated by no ambition, raised above the consciousness of danger, and of all that makes death terrible, by no enthusiasm.

Bulldon was the first to break silence.

“I say, Ally,” he observed, while the old smile, that used so witchingly to light up his countenance, still lingered about his eyes and gently parted his lips, “the world will miss us; we were going to do so many fine things for it.”

“Of which it will know nothing,” returned Allerton, gravely.

“True, it will never be conscious of its loss,” rejoined Bulldon. “They were but dreams,” he continued, thoughtfully, after a short pause,—“to be realized where we are going, perhaps.”



“Let us hope so,” said Allerton; and again they were silent.

“I could bear up against all this so well, were it not for my poor mother.” And a tear rolled down Bulldon’s pale cheek as he said this.

“I have not that sorrow,” replied Allerton. “My mother was long ago freed from all chances of grief on my account. Do you suppose that we shall recognize each other?”

“That question will soon be solved, and we shall know all,” answered Bulldon. “Oh, Allerton, what a consolation to feel that we have always tried to do our duty!” he added, presently.

His friend did not reply. Perhaps he was thinking, as every one must think at some time, how far short he had come of man’s whole duty, in spite of good intentions and oft-repeated resolutions.

The wailing notes of the music, like voices of invisible spirits, rose and died away on the trembling air; the drums throbbed out their stifled beat; and, as the music fell, the slow and measured tramp of the soldiers smote mournfully on the ear again.

They had marched about one-half the distance to the place of execution when they suddenly heard rattling discharges of musketry, which rapidly increased in volume, and to which was soon added the booming of field artillery.

A look of surprise ran through the ranks as the subdued exclamation, “We are attacked!” passed from mouth to mouth.

“Our friends are saluting us,” said Bulldon.

“Oh, if we could but fall there, instead of failing here!” said Allerton.

But the music and the march continued, and the soldiers wore an unchanged mien, as if nothing had been



heard, and as if no enemy were beating in their outermost defenses.

Presently the procession left the highway, and the scaffold, which had been shut from sight by the trees that lined the roadside, came into view. It was still some way off. Meantime the firing increased, and was plainly coming nearer. An aide-de-camp rushed by, announcing that the enemy had assailed in force, was fast driving in the outposts, and was rapidly advancing. That was the affair of the commander of the post, and the procession moved on. As it gradually drew near the place of execution, a few shells, from the hostile batteries, fell not far from the head of the column.

The Honorable Mr. Clappergong courageously and patriotically had volunteered to go with the officer whose duty it was to see the sentence done upon the prisoners, in order to behold the enemies of his party and of himself, as he more particularly regarded them, put to death.

On the first appearance of the shells, this Honorable gentleman suddenly, and with indecorous haste, retreated to the rear; nor did he halt there, but continued his course in the direction of the fort with all the speed of a pair of very good legs.

The missiles which had produced so startling an effect on the Honorable Pestyfog appeared to be only stray shots, and attracted little attention from the soldiers. Soon another came screaming along, and tore up the earth near the scaffold by its explosion.

The procession had now reached the end of its sombre march, and the order to halt was given. The officer in command was on the point of forming his men, except the especial guard of the prisoners, in a hollow square around the place of execution, when another shell, as if



guided by some pitying angel's hand, struck the gibbet, and, exploding, left the machine of death a scattered ruin.

While the officer was hesitating as if uncertain what to do, another shell burst so near his men that three of them were killed by it and as many more wounded. Seeing that the business which he had in hand could not be carried out there, he gave the order for a retrograde movement, and the procession was soon on its way towards the fort, the condemned men strictly guarded, and uncertain whether they had really obtained a respite by the destruction of the scaffold, or only a change in the manner of their execution.

The firing, which had been kept up without pause, suddenly ceased as the prisoners with their escort reached the highway.

A battery of artillery, followed by a large body of infantry, was just then passing on their way to the front and in haste to join in the conflict. The procession was halted to allow these troops to go by. As the prisoners with their guards wheeled into the road when again put in motion, they cast their eyes in the direction from which the sound of firing, so unexpectedly silenced, had come, and saw in the distance the white folds of a flag of truce shining like an angel's wing in the slant rays of the sun. The bearer was riding furiously, followed by two horsemen. Again and again they turn their heads to catch another glimpse of the signal for peace, though never so brief, as it is borne towards them far in their rear. Above the plumed caps of the intervening soldiers, above their glittering bayonets, it waves and shines and smiles. Now it is lost to view, as the little troop which brings it descends to the bottom of a valley. Now again it appears, rising from behind the ridge by which it has been hidden, rising above the undulating plumes and the bayonets



swaying in the march of the receding infantry, like a sail dawning upon shipwrecked mariners from beyond the far-off horizon and the crested waves. Next the form of the bearer is seen ; then the bearer's steed, with outstretched head and streaming mane, as he reaches the summit of the rising ground. The bearer is not a soldier ; is not a man ; is a woman ! On, on she comes, at headlong speed, the horsemen mercilessly urging their steeds to keep near her. With one hand she carries aloft the banner, with the other she waves something white, like a sheet of paper ; the bridle hangs loosely upon her horse's neck. On she comes, meeting and rushing swiftly by the artillery, by the infantry. The men look at her with wonder and admiration as she plunges past. Every leap of the superb courser brings her nearer. It is Marion ! Trangolar and Cass follow her ; they cannot keep by her side ; their horses are not so swift as that furnished her by General Sterling, the friend in need ; a charger which has been on the race-course, has triumphed there, and seems to fancy that he is again running for a prize. And so he is, for a prize such as few horses have run for, and fewer still have won. She nears the procession, the flag in one hand, the paper yet waving in the other ; she dashes past the rear, on, on, on, with a few great bounds, to the head of the column, checks her horse as she reaches the officer in command, extends to him the order with one hand, while the flag droops and falls from the other, articulates feebly and with panting effort the words, " There ! there ! " and falls fainting from her saddle.

The officer caught her in his arms and sustained her till the surgeon, who had gone with the procession for a far different purpose, came to his aid. Together they bore her to the roadside and gently laid her upon the grassy bank.



As he saw her fall, Allerton, forgetting everything but Marion's presence and danger, started as if he would rush to her assistance. A sharp command from the guard recalled him to himself, and he leaned on Bulldon for support, overpowered by the violence of his emotions.

The procession had come to a standstill. Trangolar and Cass had reached the spot, had dismounted, and were waiting to give any help that might be required.

Leaving the lady in care of the surgeon and these two faithful friends, the officer glanced at the order, resumed his place, gave the command to march, and the column went on its way to the fort.

The prisoners were remanded to the room in which they had been confined; and the officer hastened to present General Devray's order to the commander of the post, and report what had taken place.

As the door closed on them, the two friends heard the sound of firing, which seemed to be renewed by augmented forces and with increased violence.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### HELPLESS.

THE surgeon used his skill in vain. Marion showed no signs of returning consciousness. The road had now become thronged with troops,—artillery, infantry, cavalry,—all hurrying to the front. But neither the noise of the captains and the shouting, the tramp of the soldiers, the rattle of the drums, the pawing and neighing of the horses and the clatter of their iron hoofs, nor the rumble



of artillery and the now incessant roar of fire-arms, could rouse the insensible girl, or call back the faintest tinge of red to her colorless cheeks. Trangolar mounted his horse and rode to the fort for an ambulance. Returning with it, he assisted the doctor to place the maiden's helpless form in the vehicle. Then they proceeded to the house of Marion's humble friend, where she had stopped before setting out to find her father. Cass followed, leading the horses. Upon arriving at this house, Trangolar hastily wrote a note to his sister, asking her to come and give Miss Devray such attention as she needed, and sent it by Cass to the tavern where the Sisters Mary and Marguerite were when he last saw them. Then he leaped upon his horse and rode off to watch the fight. He was not free to join in it, because he had been released on parole. Yet he could not resist the feverish impatience which he felt, and therefore went away without having learned anything of what had befallen the Sisters; supposing that they were still at the inn, where he had left them safe from all present danger, anxiety, or annoyance on their own account. Cass took the note to the tavern, as he had been directed. It is not necessary to say that he did not find Sister Marguerite there. Nor could he learn where she was. The landlord had disappeared, and a general consternation reigned among the servants who were left upon the place. Panic-stricken by the attack and the nearness of the battle, travelers and sojourners at the hostelry were ordering their horses and carriages in a frenzy of haste, cursing the inevitable delays, or, with trembling precipitation, themselves harnessing their own beasts and preparing to depart. In vain Cass asked where he might find the Sisters. He could get no intelligible answer, even when he met any one who would listen to his questions. So he brought the note back to



the house where Marion was, under the care of the doctor and her humble friend, and remained near his mistress, in great distress for fear that she might never revive.

Thus it happened that the Sisters were not informed of Trangolar's return, nor he of their imprisonment; and they remained locked in a chamber at the fort, unable now to obtain such news of what was going on as even their guard could and would impart. For the sentinel placed at their door, in the excitement and confusion caused by the enemy's unexpected assault, had left his post, after having turned the key on his prisoners, and by all else they were for the time forgotten.

The distress of the two women was, if possible, increased by the complete isolation in which they now found themselves. They could hear the notes of alarm, of haste, of preparation, and the noise of marching columns, as troops were hurried to the field; could hear the frightful explosions of artillery and small-arms, which seemed ever to increase in volume, and to come nearer; yet could learn nothing certainly of what was taking place. It was easy to infer that an attack had been made, and that a battle was in progress. What the magnitude or promise of the fight might be, whether they were likely to be endangered by it, and, above all, what effect, if any, it had produced in delaying or hastening the execution of the officers in whom they appeared to feel so deep an interest, could not be inferred, and they were left in a state of harrowing uncertainty. As the hour in which the condemned men had been ordered to be put to death had passed some little time before the firing was heard, they could only conclude that the unfortunate prisoners were no more.

Such a situation could not but excite in delicate women the most poignant agony of grief and solicitude, and to it Sister Marguerite completely abandoned herself. Sister



Mary was calmer, tried to console her younger companion, and evidently strove to bear this great tribulation with resignation and tranquillity.

Allerton and Bulldon, in their prison, hear the sounds of conflict drawing near, and know that their enemies are driven before their friends, who may reach and assault the fort. What can the prisoners do to aid them? Nothing. They have not been deserted by their guard, a file of soldiers under command of a non-commissioned officer. They must wait; they may hope. For, if their friends should be victorious! if they should capture the fort! Yes, they may hope, and they do. But will their guard permit these prisoners to be taken from them alive? Probably not. Probably orders have been given to prevent such a possibility, even. There is little hope for the prisoners' lives, therefore. Yet they hope, but with much doubt and anxiety,—not so much, however, for their own safety as for the success of the attack and the victory of their friends. In comparison with the desire for the triumph of their cause, and of their brothers in arms, which has been excited by the contest now going on, all other wishes and solitudes become unimportant. And they chafe,—chafe with burning impatience at the restraint which makes them helpless auditors of the conflict.

Not so the Honorable Mr. Clappergong. When he reached the fort, after so suddenly leaving the procession on the first intimation that he was within range of the enemy's guns, the firing had not yet ceased, such good use had he made of his legs. It occurred to him, in the midst of his trepidation, that it would be well for so patriotic a personage to give some plausible reason for his undignified speed. So he hastily, and with great apparent anxiety, which he doubtless felt, though not exactly for the cause which he would have made appear, informed the first



persons of consequence whom he saw that the enemy had made an attack in great force, and was driving everything before him; that not a moment was to be lost in sending reinforcements to the scene of action; and that he was going for his horse and to look up stragglers about the village. Off he went at full speed towards the tavern, where his horse was stabled, although he had hardly recovered his breath. He had not gone far when the firing lulled, as has been related. This was a great relief to the Honorable gentleman, for it so far reassured him that he changed his pace from a run to a dog-trot, and was thus enabled to recover his wind in a great measure. As the silence continued, this pace was, in turn, slackened to a slow and deliberate walk, while he put on a bold and defiant air. He was already devising some contemptuous epithets to be applied to the enemy so soon as the loiterers about the tavern should be near enough to hear them, when he was startled by the recommencement of the firing. In a moment he was running again at his fastest gait, and, reaching the inn, he breathlessly called for his horse and a glass of brandy, said he was off to hurry up forces and volunteers from the neighborhood, mounted, and rode away as fast as his steed could carry him.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## A BARGAIN.

As has been said, Miss Mabie remained at the cottage where Clementine had enjoyed and suffered life,—where she had dreamed of bliss, had awakened to misery, and had sunk to that final sleep in which alone unchanging blessedness is known infinitely beyond the reach of the dearest dreams. There Miss Holdon learned enough to satisfy her that Ernest had as good reason as man can have to vow vengeance against the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, and she was afraid of him. Through that very fear Ernest unwittingly exercised a powerful fascination over her; and she kept near him, nervously expecting and dreading an outburst of his anger. Indeed, she had been very nervous and frightened since she heard that Allerton and Bulldon had been captured in trying to escape, and that the papers taken from Trangolar's room had been found on the person of one of them. She was shrewd enough to know that this fact alone would go far to make their condemnation at the approaching trial certain, even if she had not been told so. In spite of all her efforts to the contrary, she could not but apprehend that the Honorable Mr. Clappergong was in some way implicated in this matter. She felt, therefore, sharp prickings of conscience for the part which she had played in the affair, and would gladly have made such an explanation as should free the Honorable gentleman from blame and the young officers from the danger of an untimely and disgraceful end. The com-



punction which she felt was very much increased by the solemnity which reigned in that chamber of death. Her heart was softened by its influences. Her compassion for the prisoners and her love for Marion and the Honorable Pestyfog grew stronger, and assumed a more magnanimous character. For she did love the Honorable gentleman still, in spite of all that the gossips said of his relations with Clementine. She was dead now, poor girl! and Miss Mabie could not be jealous of her, but only pitied her. And, since she was no longer suspicious of Marion's designs on the patriot's noble heart, her tenderness for that amiable young lady, beloved by all who knew her, returned in augmented force. This very affection for Miss Devray was one source of her trouble, since she knew that Marion loved Allerton, and she feared the effect likely to be produced on her by the events which were imminent. She felt, also, much sympathy for the accused officers, whom she believed innocent of the intention with which they were charged, and which was so likely to be proved against them. They had been kind and respectful to her, and she entertained for them more than the interest of a passing acquaintance. The solemn and sorrowful event which had taken place in the cottage, and in whose presence she seemed to stand, coupled with the solicitude which she felt in regard to what might yet happen, inspired her with humility and a desire to open her heart and confess what she had done, and, if possible, prevent the catastrophe which she dreaded. With the purpose to do this, she watched for an opportunity to talk with Ernest. She had not foresight or judgment enough to perceive that what she intended to do would necessarily compromise the Honorable Mr. Clappergong. In the simplicity of her heart, she believed that the Honorable gentleman had no malicious design, but had only indulged in a pleasantry



which now, unexpectedly and by accident, threatened serious consequences. In fact, her mind was in a painful state of confusion in regard to the whole affair. Her most powerful impulse was to try and get everybody out of the scrape by talking about it.

At length the opportunity for which she had been waiting arrived, and, without appearing too obtrusive, she succeeded in obtaining Ernest's attention for a moment and introducing the subject which she had at heart. Anxiety and alarm made her even less cautious in regard to the possibility of bringing the Honorable Pestyfog into suspicion than she otherwise might have been. She told her preoccupied listener about Allerton and Bulldon; how they came to General Devray's house; how Allerton had been nursed; how Marion had fallen in love with him; how the guests, who had been so kindly treated, tried to escape, were arrested, and the papers found,—all clearly enough, but in a very disjointed way, without any regard to the logical order of events, and with many vain repetitions and digressions. She said if the young men were put to death she should never forgive herself,—oh, she knew she shouldn't!—for they were very proper and nice young men; and Miss Marion would never forgive her,—oh, she knew she wouldn't!—for she doted on Allerton. It was all her own fault,—oh, she knew it was! She ought to have told Colonel Clappergong not to do it,—oh, she knew she ought! He was so jovial and fond of a joke! The open-hearted Colonel Clappergong! Miss Mabie really thought the Honorable gentleman open-hearted, because he talked a great deal.

At the mention of Colonel Clappergong, Ernest was at once aroused from his sorrowful abstraction, and turned fiercely towards the speaker. She cowered and trembled



before the calm but terrible expression of his dark eyes and compressed lips.

“What had he to do with this affair?” asked the grief-stricken young man, with a slow but fearfully distinct utterance.

“Why, you see, he asked me to get those papers from Captain Trangolar’s room, just to play a trick on the captain. He was very particular about his papers, the captain was,” replied Miss Mabie, ready to cry; and she went on to tell all that she knew, with such expressions of distress, both in voice and manner, as would have been ludicrous but for her sincerity and the gravity of the affair which was the subject of her story. Ernest had so much respect for her trouble that he partially restrained the natural outburst of his indignation; but he could not refrain from muttering a terrible threat, the purport of which was caught by Miss Mabie, and she began to plead with him not to hurt Colonel Clappergong. He was innocent of any evil intention, she knew he must be; he was inconsiderate, when he wanted to tease anybody; he was eccentric, like all men of genius; but he had not meant any harm, she knew he hadn’t; and she continued the uninterrupted stream of her tearful supplications, to which Ernest seemed to give little heed. He stood, apparently absorbed in thought. He was turning over in his mind the principal facts brought to his knowledge by Miss Holdon. He had received many kindnesses from General Devray, whom he loved and venerated. Perhaps he could do the daughter a service, and thus delicately acknowledge his obligations to the father; while, at the same time, he should be performing an act of humanity and justice to a couple of honorable gentlemen, of whose gallantry in the field he had often heard.

At length he put an end to Miss Mabie’s overflow of



words, by asking suddenly if she would go with him to Fort —— and repeat there the statements which she had made to him, provided that he would promise not to do Colonel Clappergong any bodily injury. She replied, with alacrity, that she would.

“Then let us set out at once,” said he. “I fear we shall be too late.”

Soon they were in the saddle, and on their way, accompanied by an orderly of Ernest's command, who had followed him to the cottage.

They had ridden perhaps one-half the distance, when, on turning a sharp bend in the highway, they came face to face with the Honorable Pestyfog.

Ernest was the last man whom the Honorable gentleman would have wished to see; and, had not their approach been hidden by the trees and bushes which skirted the wayside, he would certainly have avoided this unwelcome party, even though he had been obliged to retrace his steps towards the scene of danger till he could turn into another road. As it was, he had wheeled his horse half round, when Ernest, suddenly drawing a pistol from his holster, and presenting it, ordered the Honorable gentleman to halt, emphasizing the command by a threat which made that bold personage turn pale. There was something in Ernest's manner which convinced the patriot that the young officer meant exactly what he said. He therefore thought it best not to be headstrong, although he showed a great deal of indignation, and felt for the pistol which, as a chivalrous gentleman, he invariably carried concealed on his person, as he savagely demanded the reason for such treatment. The Honorable gentleman was brave and defiant when he was sure of getting the first shot. Miss Mabie began to whimper. Ernest, paying no attention to her, and still keeping his pistol



aimed at the Honorable Pestyfog, requested him to deliver up his weapons. The politician seemed loath to comply with this demand; but another emphatic threat made by the officer, while the orderly rode up on the opposite side, enforced obedience to the order.

“Now, sir,” said the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, “will you have the goodness to tell me why I am treated in this outrageous manner?”

“Certainly, sir,” replied Ernest. “You know how you have forfeited your life to me. Had I followed my own impulses, I should have shot you at sight, as I would a thieving cur. You may thank this lady, and the angel whom you sent untimely back to heaven, that I have not done so. Besides, I want to use you, to prevent, if possible, the accomplishment of some of your devilish purposes. I infer, from what Miss Holdon has told me in the innocence of her heart, that the lives of two gentlemen have been put in jeopardy by your villainous machinations. To save them, if it be not already too late, I have left the unburied remains of my poor sister, whom you murdered——”

“It’s a lie!” broke in the Honorable gentleman.

“Providence has thrown you in my way,” went on Ernest, without heeding the interruption, “and you will now accompany us to Fort ——. If you go along peaceably, I will not take your life. I have promised this lady not to kill you for what you have already done. I let my poor sister die in the belief that I would not avenge her wrongs and her death by putting an end to your contemptible existence. But my promise binds me only as to what is past. Therefore, if your detestable life is dear to you, give me no further cause to rid the world of such a villain. March!”

The Honorable gentleman obeyed with a bad grace,



and an indescribable expression of smothered hate and ferocity; although, secretly, he congratulated himself on the prospect of getting out of that d—d scrape, as he called it, so easily, and evading punishment at the hands of Clementine's brother. The orderly, who took the hint from his commander, rode beside the captive, ready to use his pistol instantly should the coerced patriot try to escape. Ernest and Miss Mabie followed them; and thus they all went towards Fort —.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## GLAD TIDINGS.

MARION remained unconscious. The best skill of the kind surgeon and the most thoughtful care of the humble friend were powerless to conquer the hidden force which held all her faculties still as with the grasp of death. Motionless and pale as marble she lay; and the perfection of form and exquisite chiseling of her features were all the more noticeable from the entire absence of color.

“Her delicate nature has been fearfully overtasked,” said the doctor, in a low voice, to the tender nurse, as they stood by the bedside watching their lovely patient. They had been so intent on humane duties as not to mark the varying sounds of the battle. Presently, however, a loud explosion of artillery was heard, evidently so much nearer than any previous discharge that the woman could hardly suppress a scream.

“Our friends are getting the worst of it, I am afraid,” said the surgeon, “and I ought to be in the field. The enemy is certainly pushing us back towards the fort.”



The volume and suddenness of this report seemed to awaken Marion, for she sighed heavily, moved her head a little, slowly opened her eyes, and looked vacantly at the doctor and her friend for a moment; then an almost imperceptible flush passed over her face, a brighter light flickered in her eyes, and she spoke:

“There, there!” she said, “read it, read it, quick!” Then she lifted her hands feebly to her head. “Can’t you take this off my head, please? It is so heavy!” she murmured; and, closing her eyes, once more she was silent and motionless. The nurse bathed her brow, and chafed her temples and hands.

Soon Marion opened her eyes again. “Where am I?” she asked, looking at the objects about her. “Did I—did I come in time? Did I?”

“Oh, yes,” answered the doctor, who had been made acquainted with the nature of her errand and of the order which she had brought. “You arrived in good time, and the order has been obeyed.”

“Thank God!” said Marion, and an expression of ineffable relief settled on her sweet face. “I am so tired, doctor,” she added, presently, with a sigh.

“I do not wonder at that,” returned the surgeon. “Try to sleep and rest now.”

Marion shut her eyes, and, notwithstanding the incessant explosions of fire-arms, which came constantly nearer, she appeared to sink into a tranquil slumber. Nature, feeling the utter exhaustion caused by long-continued anxiety, apprehension, painful shocks, and harrowing excitements, coupled with great physical exertion, kindly administered to her child the sweetest and most potent balm, and wrapped the worn-out sufferer in forgetfulness.

The surgeon made ready some medicines for the



patient when she should awake, and left particular directions with the humble friend, then hurried away to his duties in the field. But he had not far to go. The forces of the army to which he belonged were receding towards the fortifications, though bravely contesting every inch of ground ; and the enemy was fast advancing. Presently, beaten at every point in the field, the troops who a short time before had gone out to aid their friends at the front, together with all the forces engaged upon that side, retreated to the fort and to the adjacent works. The enemy quickly followed up his advantage ; and soon shot and shell began to fall upon, and into, the stronghold.

The Sisters Mary and Marguerite now felt a new terror ; for, even to the bravest and most resigned, the horrors of a battle are terrible. Every instant deadly missiles were striking near them.

But this did not last long. The firing suddenly slackened, and from the ramparts a flag of truce was seen, already some distance in advance of the enemy's lines. The cavalcade which it protected was small, comprising not more than half a dozen horsemen, who were approaching at an easy pace.

Soon it was perceived that two of these were general officers, and, a few moments after, the characteristic colors of their uniforms, and some distinctive badges of rank, could be discerned. One of them bore the insignia peculiar to the combatants who had retreated to the fort ; and on the other the distinguishing colors worn by their antagonists could be made out. Before long the superb horsemanship and majestic mien of the officer who belonged to the party which had been worsted showed him to be General Devray, and an enthusiastic shout of welcome ran along the line of defenders as he was recognized.



The officer who rode beside this admired chieftain was General Sterling, commander of the assailants, not less noticeable for gallant bearing than was his companion. The commandant of the post, with his staff, went out to meet them; and the cavalcade, halting a little way off, waited for him to come up. Trangolar, who had kept near to and watched the battle with the feelings of a brave man who sees his comrades beaten without power to lift a hand for them, now came forward.

General Devray, addressing the commandant, said,—

“By a simultaneous movement of the enemy’s forces our armies have been, severally, compelled to surrender. Terms of capitulation have been signed, which embrace all our troops and fortified positions. By permission of the general-in-chief, to whom I gave up my sword, I have come in person to direct that this place, with its garrison, and all the men under your control, be yielded to the conquerors. It is a hard fate; but you have the consolation of knowing that no skill or bravery could avert it. Let us all accept this adverse fortune like soldiers who, having faithfully done their duty, can manfully abide the issue.”

The general did not say that solicitude on his daughter’s account had made him impatient to arrive at this military station as soon as possible.

News that the war was over quickly spread among the troops on both sides, and was received with acclamations. Even the conquered forgot the pain of defeat in their joy at the dawn of peace.

General Devray, leaving the officers to complete the final surrender, saluted them, and, with Trangolar, rode into the village, where he was greeted with every demonstration of respect and affection by those who saw him.



He had learned from General Sterling what his daughter's fortune had been, from the time she left him, to bring back the order, till she set out with the flag of truce. Trangolar was able to tell him the rest, up to the hour when he had quitted her to go and watch the progress of the fight. And they both went at once to the house where Marion had been left in care of the surgeon. She was still asleep; but the general would not allow her to be wakened. Sleep is the best nurse, and happiness the best doctor, thought he; and he sat down beside the pale and touchingly beautiful sleeper, and watched her in silence.

Trangolar was surprised not to find his sister with Miss Devray, and asked Cass, somewhat sharply, if he had carried the note as directed. In reply the servant related what he had done, and that he could not find the lady. Still more surprised by this answer, though hoping that the man had made some mistake or had imperfectly done his errand, Trangolar went to the tavern. There he learned from the landlord, who was again in his place, what had happened to the Sisters, so far as that worthy was acquainted with the facts. He only knew that they had been arrested on suspicion that they were spies, and that they had been marched off to the fort.

Away to that place hurried the brother, where he found the officer who had ordered the arrest, and upbraided him in no very gentle language. That person excused himself by saying that the seizure had been made at the suggestion of, and on information given by, the Honorable Mr. Clappergong. Trangolar did not wait to learn the nature of the information, but, with an exclamation the reverse of a prayer that the Honorable Mr. Clappergong might be blessed, hastened to liberate the unfortunate Sisters, who were overjoyed to see him, as may be supposed.



One of the first of the many questions with which they overwhelmed him was whether the officers Allerton and Bulldon had been executed. When he answered in the negative, adding that they would now be set at liberty, Sister Marguerite threw her arms about his neck, and, hiding her face on his breast, sobbed for joy, while Sister Mary, falling on her knees, with uplifted hands, upturned face, and streaming eyes, silently offered to the Great Disposer of events a thanksgiving too fervent to find expression in words.

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### AN EXPLANATION.

MEANTIME General Sterling had ascertained that the condemned men yet survived; and he at once ordered them to be brought to his headquarters, which were now established in one of the buildings within the fortifications. When the liberated officers appeared, he greeted them with great warmth, and congratulated them on their escape. Nor could he refrain from telling, with much enjoyment, of the practical joke he had played on their would-be executioners, in spoiling the scaffold by his well-aimed and lucky shot; for he himself had directed the shell which, as if by accident, had prevented the execution.

As the reader is aware, the gibbet had been set up on a high ground, and could be seen from afar. After putting his supporting columns in motion, the general, with Marion, Trangolar, and Cass, had hurried on to the front. Taking a swift survey of the enemy's position, he had noticed the



procession, as it marched up the slope, and, by the aid of his glass, had made out the scaffold. He knew for whom that structure had been erected. Hastening to a gun, which was already at work throwing shells, he directed it to be turned on the mark placed for it unawares, and himself aimed the shots which had terrified the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, destroyed the gibbet, and sent the prisoners, with all their escort, back to the fortifications.

Bulldon had bravely borne up, and carried a serene deportment, all through the trying hours which had passed, notwithstanding his weakness, and the fatigue of the march to and from the place prepared for their execution. But the revulsion of feeling caused by the removal of all necessity for self-command, and the consequent sudden relief to his heavily-tasked nervous system, overcame him, and he sank into a chair, faint and helpless. A glass of the general's excellent brandy revived him shortly, however, and the young men heard, with heartfelt pleasure, the news which their friend and, in some sense, preserver had to tell.

As he related what Marion had done in their behalf, Allerton's heart beat fast, and he could not trust himself to speak. But his thoughts were busy. He felt that he must make some acknowledgment of her generosity. He would write her a letter of thanks. That he ought, of necessity, to do, or appear, which he was not, most insensible and ungrateful. But he would not see her; no, he would not even try to see her again. He would save himself useless mortification and pain and spare her needless annoyance. Aside from any other motive, he was bound in honor, and by proper feelings of delicacy, not to endeavor, or to seem to desire, even, to take advantage of what she had done from an impulse of humanity. Yes, she had a kind heart. He would go away as soon as possible, and see



her no more, not even by chance. Now that his country had no further need of his services, he would resign his commission, go abroad, and, in foreign lands, seek the entertainments of a purposeless existence.

Bulldon was warm in his praises of Marion's bravery and magnanimity. He was even more profuse in his expressions of admiration than he otherwise would have been, perhaps; for he had noticed the emotion which his friend could not wholly conceal, and wished to make a diversion in his favor.

Some of their brother officers came in, to see and felicitate them, whenever free to do so, and conversation went gayly on. They were all engaged in a lively discussion of the stirring and propitious events which had taken place in the last twenty-four hours, when Trangolar entered, and heartily added his congratulations to the rest. His face expressed particular animation as he shook Bulldon's hand and inquired of his health with interest.

"Are you strong enough to bear a surprise?" he asked, when Bulldon had informed him that his hurt was only a trifling matter after the first benumbing effect had passed away.

"Certainly, if it were a pleasant one," answered the wounded officer, smiling.

"Come with me, then," said Trangolar. Giving his arm to the invalid, he led him across the grounds to the apartment in which the Sisters had been imprisoned, where they yet remained, and, telling him to enter, withdrew and retired to his comrades.

As he stepped into the room, Bulldon saw only Sister Mary. She ran to him, and, in a moment, was folded to his heart as he murmured,—

"Ah, mother! at last!"



“My darling boy!” she responded, her voice subdued by the intensity of affection.

Tears were shining in the eyes of each of them, as Sister Mary, who may now be called Lady X., disengaged herself from his embrace to look at her son.

Then they seated themselves, and asked many commonplace questions and made many commonplace remarks about the health and appearance of each other, and the gladness given them by this meeting. But these questions and remarks were as full of heartfelt meaning as if they had never been uttered before.

When Buldon entered this room, Sister Marguerite had turned away and quietly gone out before she was observed by him. He only noticed her retreating form as she disappeared.

“Was that Sister Mary who went out?” he asked of his mother.

“That? No. I am Sister Mary,” she replied.

“You Sister Mary?” exclaimed he, with a look of incredulity. “But you are not the Sister Mary mentioned in your letter?”

“Certainly I am——”

“And you did not come at once to see me; did not ask to see me; might not have seen me at all!”

“I did what I thought was best, my son. Think a little. You were wounded and ill,—very ill, I was told. Strict orders had been given that no one should see you till after your trial. Then I expected confidently to make myself known to you. I feared the effect which might be produced on your health by my appearance, unless you were first made to expect me. With this view I sent the last letter which you received from me. Before your trial came on, I was suspected of being a spy, of having a secret understanding with you and your friend; was seized, and



held a close prisoner, and permitted no intercourse with any one. For fear of strengthening suspicion, and thus defeating my own purpose, I said nothing of my relationship with you until the last moment, still hoping to be released in time to see you should the worst befall us. Then I wrote a petition to the commandant, in which I stated that I was your mother, and implored permission to see you once more. To this petition I received no answer, and waited, with such feelings as you, my son, can imagine, as the time named for your execution drew near and passed by."

"Indeed you must have suffered torments. What a mother you are, darling!—always thinking of and trying to spare me, and never considering yourself. But how did you find me? How did you get upon my track?"

"When I arrived in this country, some weeks ago, I learned, on inquiry, that you had visited often at the house of Madam Stanley, and that there I should probably be able to have news of you. So I called, and, on making myself known, was treated with great kindness and hospitality, and received every delicate, respectful, and generous attention from Miss Marguerite. Her mother happened at the time to be absent from home.

"I had noticed that Marguerite betrayed some emotion when I mentioned your name and told her that I was your mother; and I feared that she had bad news to impart. But, beyond the fact of your having been taken and detained a prisoner, she assured me that she knew of no accident which had befallen you."

Bulldon was now even paler than when he entered the room, and listened with painful attention. His mother continued:

"She gave me what information she possessed in regard to you, and I could see that it was such as only a more



than ordinary interest could have gathered. I perceived, as I thought, evidence of tender affection on her part, and presently found a way to draw from her the story of your mutual love, until your return, after your journey to——”

“Yes, yes,” said Bulldon, in a husky voice, interrupting his mother in her recital, “and then?”

“She was expecting you with all the impatience of love; had received a note, saying that you would be with her in the evening, when the happiness which she felt in the assurance of so soon seeing you again was increased by the unexpected arrival of her brother——”

“Her brother!”

“Yes. He had taken up arms with the party on this side of the hostile lines, and she had not seen him for a long time. Now he had been obliged to come clandestinely, and keep his presence a secret from all except the members of his own family.”

“I remember now. She told me that she had a brother who was an officer in the enemy’s army; that is, of the party opposed to the cause in which the sympathies of herself, her friends and neighbors were enlisted.”

“He did not think it prudent to be seen even by the servants, and sent a written message requesting her to meet him in a glen, at the bottom of their garden. Thither she went, as evening was coming on; and the interview lasted longer than she expected, they had so many things to say to each other. When she returned to the house, whither she hastened as soon as her brother had gone, she learned that you had been there, and, not finding her, said that you would call again later. She waited for your coming with trembling impatience, increased by the feeling that, somehow, she had been to blame in being absent when you were expected. But you



did not come. In the morning, after a sleepless and wretched night, she received a very short letter from you, containing an insinuation which she could not comprehend, and giving her to understand that she would see you no more."

"Yes," said Bulldon, speaking as if with an effort, "I did write such a letter."

"She reviewed all her conduct over and over again, but could remember nothing that she had done which should give you cause for offense. 'You know I could not possibly have done him any wrong willingly,' she said, with tears in her eyes, 'for I loved him so much.' Certain that you must be laboring under some cruel error, and conscious of her own rectitude, she wrote to you, begging an explanation of your note, and assuring you that she could not even guess the fault to which you alluded. 'I esteemed him so much,' said she, 'that I was sure he could not have used a pretext for the purpose of freeing himself from his engagements; and I felt that it was more noble in me, at such a time, to disregard the promptings of what is called womanly pride.' To this letter she had no answer."

"I never received it," said Bulldon, in the same husky voice. "I joined the army immediately, and was almost constantly in motion till taken prisoner."

"She soon heard of your sudden departure, and your destination," went on Lady X., "and, through the newspapers and other channels, had frequent accounts of you, up to the time when you were captured."

"What a stupid brute, what a villain, I have been!" said Bulldon.

"Following my promptings, she told me all this so sweetly, so tearfully, and with such becoming modesty and candor, that, for the first time in my life, I was almost



angry with you. Yet I felt certain that you were acting under some mistake, or the influence of some false representation, which would be removed if she could see you; and that you had suffered as much as she. I told her so."

"And you were right, as you always are, my dear mother," cried Bulldon, energetically.

"My confidence in the truth of this supposition gave her great relief and pleasure. I told her that I was on my way to find you, and asked her to accompany me, for my sake, as well as for her own and yours. At first she hesitated, evidently thinking that such a proceeding would appear unmaidenly; but I overcame her scruples by urging the plea that I should myself much need her companionship. As soon as was proper after her mother's return, that lady was made acquainted with my wishes. While sympathizing heartily with me, and desiring to give me every assistance in her power, she was very unwilling that Marguerite should pursue the course which I had marked out. Yet my arguments, and her daughter's manifest wishes, at length prevailed; the more easily, perhaps, because Marguerite, who had been plainly suffering in health, as well as in spirits, showed already greatly increased animation and cheerfulness from the anticipation of again seeing you, and having this, to her, dreadful mystery cleared up. Our plans were soon formed——"

"Is she here?" asked Bulldon, with sudden vivacity, breaking in upon his mother's narration.

"Wait a little, my son, and you will learn," replied Lady X. "She took the dress of a Sister of our order, as a disguise, and to make the accomplishment of our purpose more easy. We obtained letters which facilitated our progress to, and across, the lines, and, after some inquiry, ascertained that you were here——"



“Then she is with you!” cried Bulldon, rising. “It was she who left the room as I came in. Why does she avoid me? But I will go to her.”

“Not yet, my son,” said Lady X., calmly. “First let me hear your explanation; for I am sure that you have one.”

Bulldon related to her what had taken place on the evening when he last called to see Marguerite; and his abrupt action in consequence, as he had previously told the story to Allerton.

“And now can I see her?” he asked, with lively impatience.

“Remain here, and I will bring her to you,” said his mother in reply. And she left the room.

Crossing the grounds, Lady X. discovered Marguerite in a retired nook, seated on a castaway portion of a gun-carriage; and, drawing near, saw that she had been weeping. Traces of tears still rested on her sweet face, as she raised it towards her friend with a timidly questioning look. Lady X. kissed her affectionately, replying to this look only by a reassuring smile, and, twining her arm in that of the lovely girl, led her, without the interchange of a word either of inquiry or encouragement, back to the room where Bulldon was waiting, walking up and down to relieve the oppressed beating of his heart. When they reached the door, Lady X. opened it, and bade Marguerite enter. The trembling maiden obeyed with downcast eyes and a mingled feeling of timidity and eagerness, which seemed to take away all her strength. Lady X. did not go in, but gently closed the door, and withdrew to the secluded corner where she had found Marguerite. But before the door was shut she heard her son exclaim,—

“Oh, my darling! my angel! can you ever forgive me?”



And she caught a glimpse of the dear girl sinking, speechless with blissful emotion, into the outstretched arms of her lover.

Bulldon's statement of the cause of his sudden jealousy and unpardonable haste in acting upon it was soon made ; and from her own lips he heard Marguerite's story of her brother's visit.

"You might have heard it all from him, if you had wished," said she, with a look half pouting, half smiling.

"But I never saw him," said Bulldon.

"He brought you to your mother just now."

"What ! Trangolar ?"

"Yes ; he is only my half-brother, but as good to me as a whole one."

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## CHAPTER XL.

### A STONE BEARS WITNESS.

As the day was fast declining, Marion awoke, after a tranquil and refreshing sleep. Her mind was at first a little confused ; and she felt a dull and painful depression, and an indefinable sense of some great loss. When she saw her father, a thrill of joy ran through her, and called a flush of pleasure to her face, and a sweet smile to her lips. But his unexpected—or rather, as it seemed to her, sudden—appearance by her bedside increased the vague uncertainty which, for a few moments, weighed upon her. His explanation of what had occurred was shortly given, and he withdrew to the little parlor of the house, where Marion presently joined him. There, as she told him the whole story of her acquaintance with Allerton ; their



mutual love; how he had undeceived her; and with what severity she had repelled him, just as he and his amiable friend were about to attempt a return to their comrades,—for she concealed nothing,—the languor which she had felt on waking gradually gave place to natural excitement and animation, and the rich rose-tints came back to her pale cheeks.

Her father listened with tender interest, but said little. Indeed, he had small opportunity to speak till Marion's eloquent recital was finished. Her hopes were greatly encouraged by one remark which he made.

“Allerton?” said he; “I had a schoolfellow of that name once, who was my friend for years afterwards. And a better friend, or a nobler man, cannot be found. If this be his son, as is possible, I shall be right glad to see him, and he will find me much prejudiced in his favor.”

Just as Marion had ended her narrative, Miss Mabie rushed into the room, and, throwing her arms about the astonished young lady, gave vent to her feelings in a fit of hysterical weeping.

Ernest and his party had made haste, and, as they drew near to the village, received, from one and another whom they met, news of the great events which had recently taken place. Arrived at the town, they easily found out where General Devray and his daughter were, and came directly to the house.

On learning the turn which affairs had taken, the Honorable Mr. Clappergong had shown some restiveness, and a disposition to demand his release from the arrest in which he had been placed by Ernest, but was admonished that his present and future immunity from summary punishment at the hands of that officer depended on his quiet submission until the purposes of his captor should be accomplished. The Honorable gentleman protested



that he was ready to give, in a gentlemanly way, any satisfaction which might be asked; but Ernest asserted that he did not propose to deal with him after that fashion; that the mode suggested might, or might not, be an appropriate way enough for the settlement of accidental differences between gentlemen, but was one to which housebreakers and murderers must not, in any case, aspire. With a bad grace the patriot made a virtue of necessity, and rode on, under the unobtrusive but vigilant guard of the orderly.

Leaving his prisoner in charge of this faithful soldier, Ernest sent his name to General Devray, with a request for an immediate interview; which was at once granted, and the young officer was shown into the room. As he entered, Ernest remarked that the ladies, Marion and Miss Mabie, were about to withdraw, and he expressed a wish that they would remain. Then, in few words, he made known what he had learned from Miss Holdon in regard to the taking of the papers; stated concisely and forcibly his own inference from the facts which she had brought to light, and desired that person to repeat her account; which, by the aid of some questions from him, she did in a reasonably short time. But, now that the unexpected change of circumstances made it appear to her that no immediate harm to any one was likely to come from the removal and discovery of those papers, and she was thus relieved from some of her most terrifying apprehensions,—freed, also, from the solemn and softening influences which affected her at Clementine's cottage,—her heart contracted to its ordinary size, and all its small stock of sympathies was given to the patriotic and eloquent object of her love. By a process not very unusual in human experience, resulting from the change in her feelings, she began to believe that the Honorable Mr. Clappergong was very



much abused; was, in fact, fast becoming a martyr. She was sure that he had no purpose other than what he had mentioned when he asked her to bring him the drawings,—namely, to tease Captain Trangolar; and certainly he never put them in Colonel Allerton's boot. What in the world should he do that for? she should like to know; indeed she should. It was more probable that he had left them somewhat exposed, and that Colonel Allerton, finding them accidentally, had tried to make the most of them. The more she protested, the more she believed this explanation, till her faith in the entire innocence of the unjustly suspected and outraged politician could not be shaken.

As she uttered the insinuation against Allerton, Marion cast upon her a withering look of indignation and contempt; which, however, produced no other effect than to increase her positiveness and vehemence.

When Miss Mabie was at length quieted, Ernest said that the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong was at the door, and wished to pay his respects to the general. On hearing this, Marion drew her father to one side, and talked with him a moment in a low voice; then she left the room, and General Devray asked Ernest to introduce the Honorable gentleman.

The patriot came in, showing an unabashed mien, and, saluting the general with an effusion of cordiality, began, in his usual oracular manner, to talk of the surrender, which he vowed he could not understand; and he more than intimated that there must have been treachery and cowardice somewhere, which had brought about this disgraceful and everyway unnecessary termination of the war.

General Devray said but little in reply. He contented himself with calmly stating some of the reasons



which, in his judgment as a military man, made the surrender, or a great and useless outpouring of blood, inevitable.

The Honorable Mr. Clappergong would have preferred drowning in blood to surrender. No people was ever conquered which did not deserve to be. As for himself, he would rather have been killed, and that all his partisans, to a man, should have been killed, or driven into the sea, with arms in their hands, to dwell with crabs and devil-fish, than surrender to, and be obliged to live in the same country with, their detested, dishonorable, and cowardly enemies. But there was one consolation. The men who had laid down their arms would live to fight another day; and, though their armies had been surrendered, their disputes, demands, and theories had not.

Ernest said nothing; and General Devray seemed willing to let the Honorable gentleman go on, and occupy time for the present, with the expression of his brave and patriotic sentiments.

While this conversation, if such it might be called, was going forward, Marion had sent Cass with a message to Jim Hunter, requesting that he would come to her immediately. Fortunately, Jim had not been hurt in the recent fight. He was easily found, and soon made his appearance in obedience to the summons. Marion took the stone, which he had sold her, from her purse, handed it to him, and gave him instructions what to do. Then she returned to her father, coldly acknowledging the Honorable Mr. Clappergong's salutation as she came in, and took a seat by Miss Mabie, who was silently enduring tortures of apprehension lest the Honorable Pestyfog should never forgive her for having made the disclosures which had been the cause of his unwilling return to the



village, and lest Ernest should make her repeat, in the Honorable gentleman's presence, what she had already stated to General Devray.

Jim was clever enough to understand and play his part reasonably well. An attendant came and told General Devray that a soldier wished to see him. It was characteristic of this officer always to receive his soldiers, when they came to him, if he could; and he directed the servant to introduce the man. Jim entered, stopped near the door, and saluted.

"Well, my man," said the general, "what did you wish with me?"

"Why, if you please, sir," replied Jim, "I thought maybe you, or some of the gentlemen, might like to buy some plunder that I've got here."

"What is it?" asked the general.

"Well, it ain't nothin' very big, but I 'spect it's worth somethin' handsome. It's this here, if you please, sir," said the man; and, drawing the stone from his pocket, he handed it to his commander.

"That is a valuable stone," exclaimed the general. "It must have been taken from a ring."

"May I see it?" asked the Honorable Mr. Clapper-gong, pricking up his ears. "Why, this is mine, you thieving rascal! Where did you get it?" he cried, as he saw the gem. Marion said nothing; but she was, as the saying is, all eyes and ears.

"I ain't no thievin' rascal, sir," said Jim; "and, if you wants to know where I got that there stone, I don't mind tellin'."

"Are you positive that it is yours?" asked the general of the Honorable gentleman.

"Sure of it, sir. There is not another stone like that in the country. I lost it out of my ring a day or two ago.



I have looked everywhere for it in vain, and would not sell it at any price."

The Honorable gentleman had always affected to esteem the jewel much above its intrinsic value. And some of his cronies had heard not very mysterious intimations from him that it was one of the most cherished of his trophies won in the fields of love.

"It would be unfair to deprive this poor fellow of his prize," said the general, "unless you are positive of its identity."

"Why, general," replied the patriot, "I am as sure of the identity of that stone as I am of my own; besides, if you notice, there is a peculiar mark on it. I will swear that it is mine, if that be necessary. And see here," he added, taking from his purse a ring which lacked the stone that it had evidently been made to hold, "you see how it fits my ring."

The gem did, indeed, fit the ring perfectly.

"I am afraid, my good fellow," said General Devray to Jim, "that you will not be able to sell the stone. It belongs to this gentleman, as you perceive. Now let us hear how you came by it."

Encouraged by a look and sign from Marion, Jim recounted how he found the jewel, as he had previously told her. The Honorable gentleman saw the trap into which he had fallen, when it was too late.

"In your haste, when you put those papers into Colonel Allerton's boot," said Ernest, "that stone fell or was dragged from its setting."

"It's a lie!" replied the Honorable Mr. Clappergong.

"None of us think so," remarked General Devray, sternly, "and we can dispense with your further company, sir."

But the general was mistaken. Miss Mabie did think,



as the object of her interest and admiration had asserted, that somehow, but how she could not exactly tell, it was a lie.

“I beg your pardon, general, but, if you please, let this man stay a little longer,” said Ernest. “He will not faint, even should he not go at once into the open air. I told you, sir,” he continued, addressing the politician, “that this lady, Miss Holdon, in the kindness and innocence of her heart, had informed me how you came by those drawings. She was ignorant that, in so doing, she gave the clue by which your web of villainy could be unraveled; this particular one, I would say. You, therefore, have no cause of anger against her; on the contrary, you owe her a debt of gratitude, for her entreaties, joined to those of one whom I will not name in your presence, have, for a time at least, disarmed my vengeance. You know what that means. What I have to propose is a poor return for her generosity, yet one which she is amiable enough to desire. It is this: Within an hour you will seek out a magistrate, and be married to this forgiving lady, whom you have wooed but with a purpose to deceive. The orderly who conducted you here, and this honest fellow, Jim Hunter, shall serve you as witnesses, and will not leave you till she is your wife. On condition that you consent to do this, and ever after treat her as a good husband should, you shall be permitted to retire to the obscurity from which you ought never to have emerged,—where contempt, even, will scarcely follow you; otherwise, you must take the consequences of your cowardly conduct. I beg you, sir,” added Ernest, turning to General Devray, “to give what I propose your sanction.”

“As for me,” said the general, “I have no objection to make. Miss Mabie is competent to speak for herself.”

“Do you consent freely, in the presence of these wit-



nesses, to marry this woman?" asked Ernest of the chop-fallen patriot.

The Honorable gentleman hesitated a few moments.

"I consent," said he, at length.

"Freely?" demanded Ernest.

"Freely," replied the Honorable Pestyfog, in a dogged tone.

"And you, Miss Holdon," said Ernest, respectfully, to Miss Mabie, "will you take this man for your husband?"

"Indeed I will," answered the spinster, throwing her head back; and, marching up to the persecuted bridegroom, she took his passive hand, unable wholly to conceal a feeling of triumph and exultation, and a certain show of defiance, intended for those who were disposed to think the Honorable Mr. Clappergong a very mean man.

"Go, then; and be made man and wife without delay," said Ernest. "I will conduct you to the door." And he led them to where the orderly was waiting. Jim Hunter followed.

Ernest directed the two soldiers to go with the couple, and not to leave the Honorable Pestyfog, nor allow him to leave them, till the ceremony should be performed. He then returned to General Devray and Marion.

"I am afraid, sir," he said to his commander, "that I have seemed too bold in your presence. But Miss Devray can tell you by what terrible sacrifice and wrongs I have the equitable, if not the legal, right to dispose of that man."

And, bidding the father and daughter farewell, he only lingered in the village till he knew that his orders had been obeyed, and that Miss Mabie had become Mrs. Clappergong. Then he mounted his horse, and returned alone to the house of mourning.

And Marion, who had heard it from the Sisters, told her father the story of Clementine.



## CHAPTER XLI.

## SOUNDING BRASS.

ALLERTON stayed at General Sterling's headquarters, rather enduring than joining in the lively talk which was carried on there, except when he was personally addressed. For, though seemingly observant of what was passing, his thoughts were occupied with a far different subject. He was sorely perplexed as to the import of Marion's generous and heroic conduct in behalf of Buldon and himself. At one moment he was ready to believe that it indicated a disposition on her part to retract the angry words which she had uttered when she last spoke of him; the next, he was certain that she had been impelled only by motives of humanity, and a wish not to cause or permit injustice.

Worn out in body and mind by long-continued excitement and want of rest, and, as a natural consequence, depressed in spirits, the least hopeful inference appeared to him the most probable; and he gradually became more decided in his resolution to write her a letter of acknowledgment and so bid her farewell, then to leave the country as soon as he could properly do so. Happily, his fortune was so ample that he need not be deterred from following this plan by any obligation to practice frugality.

His attention was presently recalled more particularly to the conversation going on about him by the loud voice and arrogant manner of a person who had entered the



room and at once taken part in, or rather engrossed, the discussion, and whose tone and language expressed great dissatisfaction.

This person was the Honorable Schisterlow Brasstinkle. He had "run down" to the army commanded by General Sterling, while it was lying inactive, waiting till the preparations for a simultaneous advance of all the forces which fought upon that side should be completed. Here, by virtue of his political position, he had access to the officers, and signalized his zeal for the cause in which they were engaged by finding all manner of fault with the method of conducting the war, and by urging an immediate advance of that portion of the troops, without reference to any concert of action or military readiness; calling the delay by some very hard names; intimating to others that the commanding general ought to be displaced and a fighting man put in his stead,—one who would despise manœuvres and strategy, and seek only to engage the enemy in any circumstances, however disadvantageous to his own army, and try to conquer by the use of brute force alone; who would not dilly-dally, and refrain from striking, because his reinforcements had not arrived, or because he had not all the equipments, or munitions, or discipline, which he might choose to think necessary, particularly if he wished an excuse for inaction; and, generally, giving, all the time, and in the most confident tone, such advice in regard to warlike operations, and what ought, in his opinion, at once to be done, as might be expected from a man wholly ignorant of military affairs, and who was bent upon standing at the head, as the champion, of any popular notion in which a majority of the people concurred, or was likely to concur, and upon claiming the credit of suggesting every movement which should succeed; while the discredit of failure



would naturally be thrown on those who were really responsible,—that is, the officers in command.

As soon, however, as there was a sign that the opposing forces were on the eve of an engagement, the officers were freed, for a time at least, from all annoyance caused them by this Honorable gentleman. For he thought his life of too much value to the country to be exposed to destruction by a stray shot, and considered it prudent to retire to a safe distance in the rear, preferring to learn from stragglers, couriers, and others, as he could, how matters were going on in the field, ready to lead, by a long way in advance, a retrograde movement or a retreat.

Happily for him, in this instance, he had no occasion to put his speed to the test. It was, however, already well known; for, on a memorable emergency, it had kept him far ahead in a hurly-burly flight, when every one made the best time he could. It was admitted that the Honorable Schisterlow Brasstinkle had, in that notable race, distanced all competitors. But it cost him a yearly fee ever after, which was expended in the application of dye to his luxuriant hair, since a remarkable consequence of that race was that his dark locks suddenly turned gray. He said this change of color was produced by hard and long-continued mental labor, and patriotic anxiety for the success of the only party through which the country could be saved. Others said, and more truly, that the alteration was caused by the fright which he suffered during that race.

As soon as news of the surrender reached him, far in the rear, he hastened forward to headquarters, to tell how he had always insisted that a vigorous onward movement would speedily end the war, and to learn all the terms and particulars of the capitulation. As the information



sought was imparted to him, he uttered many expressions of impatience, contempt, and displeasure.

Like the Honorable Pestyfog Clapperpong, he feared that his occupation was gone. Indeed, there was a strong resemblance between the two Honorable gentlemen. They belonged to the same class; but individual interests caused them, for the time being, to stand opposed to each other in politics; that is, in their professed principles. They would as readily have acted in unison had they each seen the prospect of as great, or greater, personal profit by so doing. Both, as legislators, had been in the practice of selling what each called his country, for "a consideration;" that is, had been ready, for his own gain, to legislate away some portion of that country's interests; that is, to sell his country piecemeal; that is, in the language of merchants, to barter it at retail, instead of vending it at wholesale for one gross sum in cash. They drew a distinction; the retail business was not treason, the wholesale would be; a discrimination which only subtle minds could make. They were, in fact, either with or without a secret and express understanding, allies. By their opposing courses, and their misrepresentations and exaggerations of differences which really existed, they had been able to raise that most important, to a politician, of all phantoms, namely, an issue; to excite party spirit to the utmost, and to appear always in the van, and, consequently, as leaders in the current of popular feeling on their respective sides of the "issue." Each hoped for personal advantage should these currents meet in a hostile shock; that statesmen would be swept from their posts, and that themselves, by the help only of a little steering, should be drifted into the places thus made empty during a time of general turmoil and confusion, when passions, more than reason, govern the actions of men, and he who can best minister to the



passions is likely to be most popular; that is, to float. And therefore each had taken no small part in bringing on the war, and each had, as he expected, reaped much profit from it, while diligently keeping out of harm's way.

As has been said, the Honorable Schisterlow Brass-tinkle, like the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong, was very much dissatisfied with the surrender. But he gave a different reason for his dissatisfaction. He considered the terms of capitulation by far too lenient and honorable to the vanquished. And he did not hesitate to tell General Sterling so, with much show of excited feeling.

"By G—d, sir," said he, "I would have fought them till I had neither a man nor a musket left, before I would have granted them such terms. Now you have only wounded, you have not crippled them. You should not only conquer, but you should subvert these people. They must be reduced to such a state that they can never again rise to the position which they formerly occupied, and be strong enough to threaten once more the peace of the country, nor a second time hold in politics the balance of power, and, with the aid of our opponents, be able to cast us from our places."

"That is," said General Sterling, "for the future, you would have prosperity rendered impossible in the territory which they inhabit."

Whether the Honorable gentleman sincerely advised this policy or not, he felt perfectly safe in urging it, since he foresaw that it would be opposed, and that an "issue" would thus be raised. But for this, he might have moderated his exactions.

"Why, sir," said he, "these people must be lopped, uprooted, and others planted in their stead. And, where they cannot be eradicated, they must be bound with withes,



till they be overshadowed, obscured, stunted, and made harmless by another growth." And many other like things he said.

To all this General Sterling replied that, as he understood it, the object for which he and his men had been fighting was gained; that they had won even more than the Honorable gentleman had demanded in the early stages of the war.

"That is all very true," returned the Honorable Schisterlow, "but it was policy not to ask any more at that time. It was then necessary to make but moderate demands, in order to enlist the support of the calmer and more conscientious portion of the people; for, besides the importance of their political influence, such men are always the best volunteer soldiers. It is policy, now that the armies are organized and disciplined; now that the volunteers are bound for their term of service, and, also, to obey orders; now that their term of enlistment is so long that all which is desirable may be accomplished without calling for fresh volunteers; now that these people are scotched,—it is policy, I say, to draw their fangs."

"But," remonstrated General Sterling, "it appears to me that such a course would hardly be consistent with the professions and purposes of the party which we serve, as announced at, and shortly after, the beginning of the war."

"My dear sir," retorted the Honorable Mr. Brasstinkle, "you must remember that politic and consistent are, half the time at least, antagonistic terms. It is always consistent to be politic, but not always politic to be consistent."

Whether this dogmatic sentence expressed a truth or not, made no difference to the Honorable Schisterlow. It sounded well, and he particularly liked sounding phrases.



“Whatever your views may be, sir,” replied General Sterling, “we, as soldiers, see no reason for a continuance of this war. We see many reasons for its termination. We feel that men enough have been killed, men enough crippled for life, widows and orphans enough made, misery enough caused, property enough destroyed, hopes enough blighted, happiness enough blasted, hatred enough excited, evil passions enough let loose, vices enough germinated. We have done what we undertook to do when we drew our swords in this quarrel, and we propose to sheathe them. We were ready to strike with a will, so long as a weapon was raised against us; for we believed it necessary and right to do so. We are glad to hold our hands, now that our antagonists have grounded their arms. We believe this to be right also. If you think the contest should go on, you can summon a champion from the other side,—a fierce non-combatant like yourself,—and fight it out with him. Nobody shall object, and I will see that the lists are properly guarded, so that you shall not be checked by any interference.”

“To make a suggestion like that is mere trifling, sir,” said the Honorable Mr. Brasstinkle, “entirely unworthy of the time and place;” and he went on to urge again the necessity of placing the conqueror’s foot on the neck of the conquered, and of making the vanquished pass beneath the yoke.

“If this is to be done, and the territory of these people ravaged, it must be done by the camp-followers,” said General Sterling, placing a particular and significant emphasis on the word “followers.” “Those who have fought will not do it.”

“I understand your innuendo, sir,” retorted the Honorable Mr. Brasstinkle. “It may have more meaning than you intend. You know that



'Beneath the rule of men entirely great  
The pen is mightier than the sword.'"

"And I know, also," replied General Sterling, that

In the hands of men entirely small  
The pen is mightier than the sword:  
States may be ruined by it."

And he continued: "I will not deny your power, sir. You can foment and prolong a quarrel as well as any man of whom I ever heard. But if you wish this contest to be continued, you must carry it on yourself. And I have little doubt that you will find means to do so. But I certainly shall not expect the pleasure of mourning the loss of your valuable life, or of one drop of your blood, in the conflict."

What retort the Honorable Schisterlow Brasstinkle made, Allerton did not hear; for, disgusted with that gentleman, and weary of the whole discussion, he left the company and wandered away from the fort, to indulge in his own reflections, give way to the sadness which he could not resist, and meditate upon his future course. Strolling without purpose, except to find solitude, he drew near to a brook which ran by the fortifications and supplied water to the garrison. Soothed by its soft murmurs, he walked slowly along the bank, side by side with its winding current. He noticed that, at some distance farther down its course, it went into a grove, under overhanging boughs, making an exquisite picture of sweet seclusion. The ground, at this place, rose gently from either side, in such a manner that the streamlet ran through a little valley, just beyond the outskirts of the village. So inviting was the appearance of leafy solitude and shade by the brook-side, under the trees, that he continued his steps that way, and, entering the grove,



seated himself opposite a small rapid in the stream, where it broke over or against the brown stones, from whose sides and tops the dark-green watery vegetation floated and waved in the little curling water-courses which the current made, as it was divided by the obstructing rocks. The bank whereon he sat was mossy, and he leaned against the trunk of an aged oak, whose knotted gray roots had left the shore, and, with many contortions, ran along the bed of the rivulet, as if they envied and would imitate the graceful movements of the fishes. Here he gave himself up rather to reverie than to reflection. The noise of the brook calmed the painful tumult of his feelings, while it softened all harsher sounds, or kept them entirely from his hearing.

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## CHAPTER XLII.

### ALWAYS.

To Marion's great delight, her father emphatically declared that Colonel Allerton and his friend had been cleared from all suspicion even of dishonorable conduct, while planning and attempting their escape, by what had been proven against the Honorable Mr. Clappergong.

While they were yet talking of the strange facts recently brought to light, which showed that Honorable gentleman's real character, a note was sent in to General Devray. He opened it, looked at the signature, uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, glanced at what was written, and, saying that he would shortly return, went out.

Left alone, Marion was free to think of Allerton without



interruption or distraction, and to question herself as to how he would act, now that he was at liberty. Did he know what she had done for him? And what effect would the knowledge of her zeal for his rescue produce? Would he not see that she loved him still? Must he not feel that she had said those detestable words to him in the heat of sudden anger, and that she did not mean them,—would indeed most gladly recall and make him forget them? But, if so, why did he not come to her? How could he allow a moment to pass after he was set free before he pressed her to his heart? Why did he not fly to her arms as she would to his, if she could,—if a maiden might do so?

Would he come at all? Had she not quenched his love? What was he doing? Durst she go to him and acknowledge her fault and her unchangeable affection? Would he receive her? Would he not despise her for so doing? Might a woman do such a thing?

Oh, if he would only come to her! Will he never come? Shall she never see him again, never have an opportunity to tell him how sorry she feels,—to let him see how infinitely dearer than ever he is to her?

As these and similar thoughts ran through her mind, she stood at the window, and vainly strained her eyes in the direction from which, if at all, Allerton must come. The minutes wore away, each an hour in seeming duration, but he came not.

Unable longer to abide in the house waiting for his coming, she walked forth, hoping that she might perchance meet him, or hear news of him. Yet she could not trust herself to ask any of the persons whom she saw if they had seen Colonel Allerton. Nor did she perceive any sign of his drawing near. She did not go to the fort. She was unable to do that; it would be too bold, too un-



maidenly. She had lost his love, and she could not bear to risk the loss of his respect also.

Oh, if she might only meet him, as though by chance ! But perhaps he has already left the village, and hurried away to those friends who should be so happy to see him after his many perils. Yet could he go away, never to see her again, without one word of farewell ? Even she should not blame him for doing so. And yet, if he really loved her, was it possible for him to depart, and be separated from her forever, never, never to see her any more, without saying good-by and giving her a last embrace ?

Now that, to her mind, it began to seem certain, even if he still remained in the neighborhood, that he did not wish a renewal of his acquaintance with her, she could not restrain her tears.

She returned towards her humble friend's house, which stood on the outskirts of the village, as has been said. But, instead of entering it, she continued her way a few steps down the narrow path to the grove, which was close at hand. This grove, and the brook-side, had been her favorite resorts, when in the village. She wanted to go there again, and, throwing herself down by the murmuring waters, weep her heart away. There she could give free course to her grief, and fear no intrusion or observation.

Now, it happened that Marion approached the brook a short way only from where Allerton was seated. He did not hear her, because of the noise made by the water in the little rapid ; and she did not see him, partly because he was half hidden by the aged oak, and partly because she was half blinded by her tears, and by the handkerchief with which she absorbed their crystal flow. She threw herself along upon the bank, and cried as if her



heart would break. In a little while, however, the violence of her emotions was exhausted, and only convulsive sobs, from time to time, and the tears, which yet continued to run, told of her sufferings. Near her the water was still, and the noise of the brook, breaking over the stones above, did not prevent her hearing distinctly any other sound.

As her grief became tranquil and silent, she was startled by a long-drawn sigh, so deep that it seemed almost a groan. Raising her head, and glancing fearfully around, she was terrified to see the body of a man but a short distance from her, half stretched, half sitting, upon the bank. His head was thrown back and concealed behind the tree against which he leaned. She could not restrain an exclamation of alarm, and, springing up, was on the point of making a headlong flight, when the man, who had evidently been roused by the cry which she uttered, quickly arose, and, taking one step towards her, stood clearly revealed. It was Allerton.

“Marion!” he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise, as if he were questioning the evidence of his own senses. He stood still, looking mournfully at her. She had impulsively started towards him the moment he was recognized. But, seeing that he did not approach her, she suddenly stopped, looking at him for an instant, while her very soul appeared to be flowing out to him through her large dark eyes, and then cast down her lids, veiling with their long lashes the truthful light which glowed in their depths and suffused her beaming orbs. Yet she had gazed long enough to note how sad and pale he looked. For a moment she seemed irresolute. Then, going to him with her hand extended and her eyes newly filled with tears, she said, in a trembling voice,—

“Colonel Allerton, I want—I want—to apologize—for



the injustice which I did you. I wish to recall the words which escaped me in anger. I did not mean them. I did not think—I was very wrong—I——”

Here her voice almost broke down, and she stopped, fearing to trust it further.

Allerton had taken the hand which she offered, and continued to hold it, without pressing it, while his eyes were fixed upon her, as if he would read her heart. The touching expression of sadness and suffering remained unchanged on his pale face.

After a moment's silence he spoke.

“I am very sorry,” said he, in tones which betrayed, by their very evenness, the force exercised to make them apparently calm,—“I am very sorry that Miss Devray should feel it necessary to tender any apology to me. There is no cause. The kindness which she has shown to a stranger, and the happiness which I owe to her, bind me forever her debtor; even had she not so much increased the obligation by her heroic efforts in behalf of my friend and myself——”

Marion interrupted him. When he first began to speak, she had withdrawn her hand, which he did not try to retain, and stood, with downcast eyes and heaving bosom, listening to his cold and distant language. But, suddenly lifting her head, and looking him earnestly in the face, she cried,—

“Oh, Allerton! what do you mean? Will you not understand me? Will you not forgive me?”

Her voice thrilled him. It was that of her heart speaking without disguise; and the expression of her eyes, whose soft light seemed to envelop and penetrate him, melted his soul; for it was as if her soul did then touch his own, as she stood with her head and shoulders a little thrown back to look up at him, the tumultuous agitations



of her breast only half concealed by the light drapery which she wore.

“Oh, Marion!” he exclaimed, drawing her, unresisting, to his heart, “may I understand you as I will?—may I, my darling, my love, my angel?”

“Yes, yes,” she murmured, as her head sank on his shoulder; and she yielded her elegant form to his embrace with that graceful suppleness which says so eloquently and touchingly, “Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight,” expressing all of love and trust.

“And you are mine still?” he whispered, between the thousand kisses with which he covered her lips, her cheeks, her eyes, and her brow; and his ear caught from her breath the response as if her heart in uttering it would dispense with the common mechanism by which words, mere words, are made;

“Yes, darling.”

“Always?” asked he.

“Always,” she replied.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

### AN INVITATION.

“LET us go to my father,” said Marion, at length; “he knows not where I am, and will be anxious about me. Besides, I want to present you to him.”

And with the serenity of complete happiness, their beauty heightened by the soft glow of unclouded love, they walked slowly to the house where Marion lodged.

The trees were casting very long shadows when the lovers came out of the grove, and a great glory illumined all the west.



As they entered the room where Marion expected to meet her father, they were surprised to see not only General Devray, but Sister Mary, Sister Marguerite, Bulldon, Trangolar, and General Sterling. The bright color in the sweet girl's face grew still brighter and deeper as she approached her father and gracefully presented Colonel Allerton. The general shook him warmly by the hand.

"I am very glad to meet you, sir," said he. "I have heard much of you; and General Sterling has told me, with other things not less calculated to excite my respect and esteem, that you are the son of one of my first and best friends. What I know of you already makes me certain that you are worthy of such a father; no small praise, I assure you, sir."

"It has always been my desire to honor my father by aiming to be like him," replied Allerton, modestly.

Taking Marion by the hand, the general led her to Sister Mary, saying,—

"My child, I wish you to be acquainted with your aunt, Lady X., my sister Gertrude, of whom you have been kept in ignorance through my fault. Judging by appearances alone, I have done this dear sister a great, cruel, and long-continued wrong. She will some time tell you the reasons, such as they were, which induced me to pursue a course so unworthy, for she can and will find better excuses for me than I can for myself. But I am happy in knowing that I was wrong; happier still that she forgives me and that we are again united. She sent the note which called me away from you so hastily, asking that I would come to her. It was the first intimation I received that she was here; otherwise I should have been beforehand with her in seeking an interview. You cannot love her too much, my darling."

Marion looked at her aunt with an expression of pleased



surprise on her eloquent features ; then, with the impulsiveness of her nature, she threw her arms around Sister Mary's neck and kissed her warmly. It was an inexpressible relief for her to kiss somebody, she was so happy. Sister Mary returned the embrace tenderly, while tears sprang to her soft eyes.

Turning to Bulldon, who stood near, Sister Mary introduced him to her niece as Lord X., her son, and Marion's cousin. With a mischievous smile on his handsome face, the presuming young man imprinted a hearty kiss on his beautiful relative's scarlet cheek.

"I have felt, ever since I knew you, that we ought to be cousins," said he. "It is a feeling which I am apt to have whenever I see a particularly splendid woman ; but never so strong as in this instance ;" and the mischievous smile grew brighter as he said this. "I shall be a firm believer in presentiments and intuitions hereafter."

"You are very good, and I shall like you exceedingly, as a real cousin, I have no doubt," replied Marion, with vivacity, placing a significant emphasis on the word "real." And she added, "Provided, however, that you get into no more scrapes."

"Now it is my turn," said Bulldon ; and he led Marion to Sister Marguerite, who had retired a little behind Lady X. "I want you to know this lady, Miss Marguerite Stanley, late Sister Marguerite, now my betrothed wife." And, while the young women were exchanging courtesies and congratulations, he brought up Allerton, who was presented by him to Lady X. and Miss Stanley.

"And this gentleman," said Bulldon, turning to Trangolar, "with whom you are already acquainted, is Miss Stanley's half-brother, and the horrible fellow of whom I was so jealous."

While passing a few words with Trangolar, Allerton



noticed that Marion's father was standing a little apart, and alone. Excusing himself, he went directly to General Devray, and, looking him respectfully and frankly in the face, he said,—

“I have a confession to make to you, sir.”

“I am surprised to hear it,” replied the general, “for confession implies a fault, or the consciousness of an injury done.”

“Or an unintentional error,” rejoined Allerton. “What I have to say relates to the circumstances in which I first became acquainted with Miss Devray, and how I took what might justly enough be called an ungenerous, possibly a dishonorable, advantage of the frank hospitality received at your house; for, during the time that I was entertained and most kindly cherished there, I won, as I am very happy to believe, your daughter's affections.”

“I trust you do not consider that a crime?” said the general.

“Not if you will overlook it,” returned Allerton.

“In you with pleasure; in another it might be otherwise; since I love myself in my child, and am selfish for her. Do you love Marion?”

General Devray spoke in the straightforward manner said to be characteristic of soldiers.

“With all my heart,” replied Allerton, earnestly, “and would make her my wife, if I might with your consent.”

“Then take her, sir, and God bless you both!” returned the general, taking Allerton's hand and pressing it warmly.

Marion, at a little distance, had been no indifferent spectator of this interview, and well divined its import, as her lover could see when, at its conclusion, his eyes sought her own.

General Sterling had become acquainted with all the



persons present, and soon knew the relation which they held to one another. He now proposed to make a little feast in the evening, and invited them all to come. He said it would be a fit way of closing such an eventful day, and of celebrating the happy reunion of so many friends. He would have a tent prepared for the occasion. And they all promised to be there.

Then the lovers strolled out to enjoy a walk in the twilight; Trangolar went about his business, if he had any; General Sterling went to prepare for the feast; and General Devray and Lady X. remained to talk.

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## CHAPTER XLIV.

### A FEAST.

WITH excellent taste, General Sterling had chosen the grove, where Marion and Allerton became reconciled, as the scene of the feast.

Had some gossiping old bird, too faded and shrunk to be wooed and kissed any more, been looking and listening in the tree-tops, uneasily drooping her ragged wings and turning her shriveled beak from one side to the other, while the young man and his sweetheart were together by the brook-side? And had she told the general all about the lovers' meeting, and how she had been shocked at what they did in the obscurity of the grove and the twilight, and especially at Marion's laying her head on Allerton's bosom and letting him fondle and caress her at will? Or had this spot been selected only for its appropriateness and beauty?



The general caused a shelter of canvas to be erected over the space particularly marked out for the festival.

As darkness drew on, a thousand soft lights, of every pleasing tint, began to appear in the trees, and at a little distance from either end of the table bent an arch, in which the colored lanterns were so arranged as to represent the hues of a rainbow; making, in fact, a striking imitation of that cheering sign in the heavens; a bow of hope and a signal of peace over the persons assembled within its embracing sweep. Far above, in the clear blue vault, a million stars, white as the robes of angels, looked down, and seemed to peep smilingly in, through the foliage, upon the happy company. Even the Man in the Moon wore an unusually becoming smile.

A fine military band made exquisite music; and, when it was not playing, the sweet babble of the brook, and the soft murmur of the leaves, could be heard.

The guests were not many. General Sterling occupied one end of the table, and General Devray the other. Marion sat at General Sterling's right hand, and Marguerite at the right hand of General Devray. Allerton and Bulldon were placed next to their respective sweethearts. Lady X. was seated at General Sterling's left, and Mrs. Clappergong at the left of General Devray. For both the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, with his wife, and the Honorable Mr. Brasstinkle were there. The two Honorable gentlemen sat opposite to each other, at the middle of the table.

General Sterling, with the generosity of a soldier and a brave man, extended invitations to the two Honorable gentlemen, feeling that at such a time all differences should be forgotten. And the Honorable gentlemen were always ready to eat and drink at any table which was well furnished.



Allerton and Bulldon had both particularly asked that Mrs. Clappergong should be invited. The Honorable Mr. Brasstinkle alone objected to the presence of the Honorable Mr. Clappergong at the feast; and he stated some of the reasons for his opposition, very dictatorially, to General Sterling.

"Why, sir," said he, "that man should now be the occupant of a felon's cell, loaded with irons, and only permitted to come out when he is led to the gallows."

Perhaps the Honorable Mr. Brasstinkle was right; he knew more of the Honorable Pestyfog than did the general. But that officer made it clearly understood that he could and should arrange his own table, and choose his own guests, without deference to political dictation.

The fact was, that the Honorable Schisterlow Brass-tinkle had his own personal reasons for wishing to have the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong put where he should be forever incapable of demanding an account, or a share in political profits, and where it should be impossible for him to disclose certain transactions in which, as politicians, they had been engaged.

Trangular was at the table, and some of the staff officers of both generals. Cass's shining and happy face was conspicuous among the attendants who served the feast.

For some time the conversation was quietly carried on between neighbors around the board. At first the two Honorable gentlemen did not say much. The viands were good, and they were both hungry and thirsty. Such politicians are apt to be so. And, in the country where these things took place, they had all the qualities of their class in fullest development.

Toasts to the health and happiness of the lovers had been duly proposed and honored.

"May their union never be broken!" said General



Devray, "but grow closer and closer, and be symbolical of that henceforth to exist between the parties to this dreadful conflict, at length happily ended. Let us hope that now all misunderstandings are removed, all misconceptions corrected, our acquaintance with each other made more perfect, and our erroneous judgments reversed."

"I beg leave to protest," said the Honorable Mr. Clappercong, somewhat excitedly, "that there have been no misconceptions, no misunderstandings, and no mistakes made upon our side, except by the military. It is true that the chances of war have turned against us this time, and we are forced, for the present, to submit. But the questions at issue have not been settled; our cause is not lost. It cannot die, and shall yet be vindicated."

It was furthest from General Devray's intention, or thoughts, to suggest, even, a political topic. But he had forgotten that a politician is nothing if not political.

The moment the Honorable Mr. Clappercong had finished his protest, the Honorable Mr. Brasstinkle retorted.

"It is true," said he, "that the questions at issue are not settled, and will not be till we have guarantees for the future, as well as submission for the present. It shall be our aim not to relax our advantage till there shall be no power left with our opponents ever to renew this contest. We have full confidence in our ingenuity to invent the ways and means for completing this necessary supplement to our victory."

"I deprecate these sentiments," said General Sterling. "Let there be no oppression, no vindictiveness, nor any triumph in which both parties may not join. Let there be a thanksgiving and a jubilee because this most distressing war is over, and peace come again to us all. I am no farmer," he added, "but I want to turn my weapons into plowshares and pruning-hooks, and do something



to eradicate the weeds which have sprung up all over our goodly land while we have been engaged in the work of destruction."

"And let this be a feud of the fathers only," said General Devray, "which they have ended by wager of battle. Let it not descend to their children. We, on our side, have done our best, but the decision is against us. Let us accept it as final, like good and true men, who have faith in the tribunal to which they appealed. Let us not, like dishonest or mean-spirited gamesters, refuse to pay the stakes, or try to wriggle out of the position in which we placed ourselves, now that we have lost."

"I propose the health of Lady X.," said General Sterling, "the noble Sister of Charity, whose presence here is most appropriate; for where, better than here, could charity be employed?"

This sentiment was responded to heartily by all present, save the two Honorable gentlemen, who affected not to hear it. Their respective appetites were now temporarily satisfied, and, after the exchange of a significant look, one of them rose and left the table. The other followed him in a few minutes.

Their going excited no regret, and no remark or apprehension, for some time, and the current of talk and of good feeling flowed on undisturbed.

At length, however, Mrs. Clappergong's nervous restlessness and anxiety drew General Devray's notice, and, on questioning her, he learned that she was greatly alarmed by the prolonged absence of her husband. Although, with the exception of the fond wife, no one desired to hasten the return of the two Honorable gentlemen, yet, out of respect for her solicitude, messengers were dispatched to look after them. For a time the search was fruitless; but by-and-by Cass, who was one of those sent,



saw a dim light in an obscure part of the grove. Approaching, he discovered that it came from a lantern, which was placed upon the ground, and, near by, he saw the bodies of the Honorable gentlemen, both dead. His outcries brought other seekers to the spot, and they perceived that the Honorable gentlemen had plainly fallen in a hostile contest with each other. Each bore tooth-marks inflicted by his antagonist, and the Honorable Schisterlow Brasstinkle's left hand still held the throat of his opponent in a death-grip, while his right hand yet grasped a heavy steel pen, which he was in the habit of carrying, now blunted and broken. In the right hand of the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong a murderous knife was clutched.

Only afterwards did it come out that they had quarreled about the division of profits made through the war, much the larger part by the Honorable Schisterlow Brasstinkle, since he had been on the winning side, but who was unwilling to give up so great a share as the other demanded; that, in the heat of sudden anger, the Honorable Schisterlow Brasstinkle had assaulted the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong with the pen, which he was using to compute the accounts in question, and arrange, after his own manner, the division of the spoils; that the Honorable Pestyfog Clappergong had thereupon drawn his knife, and in this way their accounts were finally settled.

Then it was known that they had, in a way, been leagued together.

The announcement of their death, and the manner of it, caused more smiles than tears. Only Mrs. Clappergong was plunged in deep grief, for she alone, as is usually the case with wives, was ignorant of her husband's real character.

The feast had already come to an end, and the guests



had separated. But in the camp, groups of soldiers, who had so recently been engaged, man against man, in deadly conflict, prolonged far into the night their friendly interchange of courtesies and kindnesses, and emulated one another in praising the gallantry of their late antagonists and in hurrahing for the restoration of peace and union.

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## CHAPTER XLV.

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THE preparations for a double wedding were speedily made, and, after their marriage, Bulldon took his lovely and gentle wife over the sea, whither he went to assume his title and possession of his estates. Allerton, with Marion, the most beautiful bride that had ever yet crossed those waters traversed by so many beautiful women, went with Lord X. and Marguerite on their bridal tour. And the faithful Cass accompanied them.

On both sides of those waters there were yet to be many happy meetings of the friends now temporarily separated. And by-and-by to those reunions bright young cousin cherubs were to come, and call General Devray grandpa, and Sister Mary grandma.

For General Devray had said to Sister Mary, "My wife has been long dead; Miss Mabie has deserted me; Marion has gone from me to fulfill the happier duties of wife and mother, and I am left alone. Come and live with me. Can you find better exercise for your charity, dear sister, than as my companion, giving me such opportunity as you may to repair the wrongs which I have done you?"



And she dwelt with him.

Trangolar, when not visiting his sister, or some other of his friends, and playing with their children, was wiping his spectacles and trying to get a further insight into the beauties of mathematics; making angles of every degree; and drawing all kinds of Gons, with strange given-names, of which Polly was the only one that sounded Christian-like.

Mrs. Clappergong mourned for her lost love, and felt that the world was dark, because a great light had been put out.

General Sterling lived an honest man, and did his duty.

As news that the war was over circulated with lightning speed to the remotest parts of the country which had been the scene of all its horrors, and of the events narrated in these pages, the widows and orphans, the bereaved old men, and the betrothed maidens whose promised bridegrooms had been left unburied in the lonely places where they fell, or hidden from the sight of men in the nameless graves, far away from them in their desolated homes, humbly and fervently thanked God for the peace which had come again, and shed fresh tears because their lost ones were not living to share in the general joy.

In their club-rooms the politicians, partisans and followers of the Honorable Mr. Brasstinkle and of the Honorable Mr. Clappergong, respectively, boasted for the victory, and cunningly invented ways to make their triumph lasting, and humiliating to the conquered; to create and nourish irritating issues, and retain the power which they had gotten during the confusion and terror caused by the clangor of arms, while the laws were silent; or, upon the other side, censured the defeat which their party had sustained, and the honorable men, in spite of whose self-sacrificing and bravest efforts it had



been suffered; and prepared methods to avoid its consequences, disregard the decision of battle which they had invoked, and renew the contest in such manner as might yet be possible with them. Meanwhile, upon both sides, they industriously wrought schemes to plunder the people, peaceably; and only sought to excite a warlike spirit that their booty might be greater.

The statesmen, who were few,—for statesmen, like poets, are born, not made,—a large part of whom, also, in trying to withstand the onrush of popular passions, and prevent the threatened meeting of the hostile currents, before the war began, had been overwhelmed, and left among the drift and pieces of wreck made by breaking up the established order of things, in the eddies of the flood, powerless to do more than mournfully witness the destruction, until the torrents should abate, from each side now strove to join hands, and devise modes to relieve the suffering and restore the waste places caused by the war.

Yet a great portion of the people were so inconsiderate and selfish, so neglectful of their public duties, and so easily worked upon and deceived by the intrigues of designing men, and, when thus worked upon, so ready to yield reason to the guidance of passion, that the more thoughtful and wiser part could not free themselves from apprehension and anxiety, but frequently asked one another,

“HOW WILL IT END?”







# HERODIAS, ANTONIUS, AND SALOME.

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## DRAMATIC POEMS

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AUTHOR OF "HOW WILL IT END?" ETC. ETC.

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*Letter from the HON. EDWARD EVERETT.*

"As a story, the dramatic interest is drawn out with ingenuity, from the few incidents contained in the sacred narrative, and is sustained with skill to the end. The poetical execution is of a high order, and indeed indicates uncommon poetical talent, such as, if you had decided to make poetry the business of your life, instead of the far different study of the law, would have conducted you to no humble place on the sides of Parnassus.

"I remain, as ever, your sincere friend,

"EDWARD EVERETT."

ANTONIUS.

"Take the following passage as a fair sample of the best and largest portions : . . . a passage that might well be mistaken for a dropped jewel of Shakspeare by even the wariest of judges. . . . We do not know of a grander manifestation of inherent, uncontrollable power than may be found in the following lines :"—*The N. Y. World.*

"'Antonius' is a dramatic poem by the author of 'Herodias,' a work which has made a deep impression on appreciative readers by its originality and power. The plot is founded on the Druidical rites in ancient Britain, and is carried out with great boldness of conception and vigor of execution. . . . The author blends a singular command of expressive poetic language, with a creative imagination, and has managed his historical materials with admirable effect."—*The N. Y. Tribune.*

"The reputation established by the author's earlier literary venture is not dimmed by the production of his second volume."—*N. Y. Evening Post.*

"Many passages of rare beauty occur throughout these works, and the productions, as a whole, entitle their author to a position in the foremost rank of English poets."—*Philadelphia Inquirer.*

"We believe the author to be endued with no small share of the true poetic spirit, which induces us to predict for him the '*os magna sonaturum.*'"—*Round Table.*

"The author, J. C. Heywood, is a member of the New York bar, and has already displayed remarkable talent in 'Herodias,' a poem of great vigor and originality." . . .



“The poem abounds with passages of great beauty and force, and determines the author as one of the first dramatic writers of the day. The scene in which Kaliphilus confesses to Salome at once his love and his terrible doom is a magnificent effort of poetic genius.”—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

“Each of the poems exhibits a high degree of ability, both of conception and execution. . . . The vigor, rhetoric, and elevation of thought and language are far beyond what we observe in our current poetizing.”—*Literary Gazette and Publishers' Circular*.

“Some parts of the dialogues are full of beauty.”—*The Press*.

“‘Herodias’ is a Christian drama, enacted in Palestine. *Antonius* is a Pagan tragedy, transpiring in Britain. . . . The first is a striking composition, with large scope of design and force of delineation. . . . But *Antonius* is more powerful and tragic. . . . Such plays are rare,—very rare. They are the results of a thoroughly dramatic and original mind, which has been applied to the great masters of tragedy, and to the classic and permanent principle of dramatic composition. The result is not only in the very highest degree honorable to the author, but necessarily grateful to the reader. . . . We commend them, with extreme confidence, to the attention of all readers.”—*North American and U. S. Gazette*.

“‘*Antonius*’ is a grand poem, and a noble drama, full of strength and simplicity. . . . Detached passages, like these, give no just idea of the largeness and wholeness which characterize both ‘*Antonius*’ and ‘*Herodias*.’ ”—*John Neal*.

## SALOME.

“An intricate plot is well sustained through three volumes, each of which is complete in itself, although together they constitute a single work. The subject is a heroic one, and the author has grappled with it boldly and successfully. . . . The author displays great ability.”—*New York Evening Post*.

“‘*Salome*,’ however, is but the sequel to ‘*Herodias*’ and ‘*Antonius*,’ which have already appeared and passed the fiery ordeal of stake and fagot, blast and mildew, and come forth like fine gold. . . . What shall we say of this remarkable drama as a whole? This, and this only, that it is altogether astonishing; . . . worthy to rank among the finest productions of our day, both as a drama and as a poem.”—*The New York World*.



"Of 'Herodias' and 'Antonius' it is needless to speak. They have been received, not only with cordiality, but with enthusiasm, by the press and public. . . . The qualities that make Mr. Heywood an author of unusual promise are elevated tone of sentiment, strength and facility of expression, logical power in construction, appreciation of good dramatic situations, and boldness in attempting a really original subject. . . . The movement of the story in this poem is rapid, and the interest is always sustained. . . . Taken as a whole, 'Salome' is superior, in dramatic intensity, to the preceding poems, while together they form a work of great power and originality."—*New York Leader*.

"This, in its grandeur, is more than Greek,—it is Hebrew,—almost scriptural, indeed. . . . Of course if the author is equal to the business before him, and capable of handling such a crowd of characters, amid such tumultuous incidents and scenery, he must have within him great dramatic power; and this we think he has; for, up to the last, the subject is bravely managed. . . . With the simplicity and grace of a naked Grecian statue, these dramas abound in situations full of interest, and are swelling in every vein and artery with pulsations that only true poets can feel or understand. . . . For a young American to launch a drama in three volumes, and one after another, as Mr. Heywood has done, without stopping to breathe, or seem to care much what contemporaries might think of it, before the whole should be completed, betokens an amount of manly self-reliance, which, now that we have all three before us, we cannot help justifying and applauding as absolutely heroic."—*Putnam's Magazine*.

"These poems will live to be appreciated as long as the English language endures," said Dr. J. G. Cogswell in a letter to a friend.

*Letter from the eminent scholar and critic, the late JOS. G. COGSWELL, LL.D.*

"MY DEAR MR. HEYWOOD,—I want to put on record the impression made on my mind by the great dramatic poem, or poems, Herodias, Antonius, Salome,—not that I consider my opinion of importance to the author, but that I want the credit of having anticipated the universal favor with which it has been received by the best critical judgment of the country. Herodias, the first of the poems in the order of publication, then called Salome, came into my hands about two years ago. I had not then heard or read a word about it, and I had no knowl-



edge of its author. I began to read it, more that I might not sit idle than with an intention of reading it through, but I found I could not stop, and did not close the book until I had finished it. . . . It was marvelous to me that I had not heard of the poet who had caught the highest spirit of the Greek drama and with it combined that of the Hebrew prophet. . . . Never was a lofty flight more triumphantly sustained. There was no exhaustion of power by the first effort; the three parts are marked by the same lofty thought and the same felicitous language. . . . The individual characters are all drawn by a master-hand, and, as delineations, are perfect and consistent throughout. . . .

“Very truly, and with great regard, your friend,

“JOS. G. COGSWELL.

“NEW YORK, May 25th (1868).”

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## HERODIAS, ANTONIUS, AND SALOME

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